BAPU AS I SAW HIM

The original in Hindi

by

RAMNARAYAN CHAUDHARY

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Bapu dressing the leprous sores of Parchure Shastri in Sevagram [p. 193]

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DEDICATION

Way back in 1908, one evening in Jaipur when I—a young lad studying in the 7th standard—was coming home from the Ramniwas Bagh, I noticed a blind old woman asking for help to guide her to her place. Something in me impelled me to respond to her call and I immediately went up to her, took hold of her staff and led her to her destination. That was my first taste of the delight that is to be had in service and I have often felt that not I but she it was who led me on the path to my destination. This book is gratefully and respectfully dedicated to the stranger who though bereft of the outer vision possessed, so I believe, the precious inner vision.

Ramnarayan Chaudhary

FOREWORD

A good few of those who have read my Hindi book *Vartaman Rajasthan*—consisting mostly of the reminiscences of my public life in relation to Rajasthan—have often asked me to write a similar book of reminiscences about Gandhiji. My dear friend, Pandit Banarasidas Chaturvedi, has particularly urged it on me to do so whenever I had the occasion to meet him or correspond with him. He even made the suggestion that I should write the contemplated book in English so that it may be of use to the foreign readers as well. Shri Jivanji Desai, the Managing Trustee of the Navajivan Trust, has also expressed his wish that all those who were associated with Gandhiji had better put down their recollections of Bapu in writing and thus make them available to a wider public, if only to help the new generation to a better appreciation of the life and work of the Father of the Nation. Kaka Kalelkar too has made a similar appeal to the people concerned in his book, *Stray Glimpses of Bapu*. I have, therefore, thought it fit to place before the public some of the glimpses of Bapu as I saw him during my twenty years' close and ten years' not so close association with him.

There is, however, one caution which must be strictly observed either in writing or reading such books. It is this that excepting the words which are directly quoted from the writings or the speeches of the great man concerned everything else that is written in presentation of his views should be treated not as his own views but as an interpretation of those views by

the writer of the book. I, therefore, request the readers of these reminiscences to bear this warning in their minds while they read them and thus avoid the possibility of misunderstanding Gandhiji's views on any particular subject or doing an injustice to them.

These reminiscences also include some by my wife, Shrimati Anjanadevi. Besides, they also include some —very few and as far as possible very short—about those of Gandhiji's associates who are now no more in this world or who have left a deep impression on me. They have been given here because I felt that their inclusion was necessary in order to present an adequate picture of Gandhiji as I saw him.

Finally, I hope that the book would be found useful in adding—in howsoever slight a measure—to the knowledge of the readers about the greatest man not only of this age but, to me, of all time.

Ajmer
January 30, 1954 Ramnarayan Chaudhary

BAPU AS I SAW HIM

1

I heard about Gandhiji, for the first time, when I was a student of the Intermediate class in the Maharaja College at Jaipur. The late Pandit Arjunlal Sethi was the first to arouse political consciousness in Rajasthan. I was influenced by him, and revolutionary ideas occupied my mind. In South Africa, Mahatma Gandhi's Satyagraha movement was gaining momentum. There was a sympathetic response here, in India, and meetings were being held and collections made in support of the movement. Jaipur was an Indian State whose policies were dictated by a British Resident. There was more suppression of civil liberties in Indian States than even in British India. Such was British policy. So stifling was the atmosphere that, while the rest of India was astir, things were tranquil at Jaipur. Newspapers, however, brought disturbing news into the State which caused unrest in the minds of educated people.

Our group subscribed to two monthly magazines in Hindi,—*Maryada* edited by Krishna Kant Malaviya, and the *Prabha*, by Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi. On the one hand, these journals published life sketches and activities of the revolutionaries; on the other, they gave inspiring accounts of the progress of Gandhiji's Satyagraha movement in South Africa. My first reaction was of hatred against the white people, and the second, one of satisfaction that, after all, there had appeared on the horizon one among the Indians who was revolting out there, and leading a collective action against British Imperialism. This sowed in my young heart a hope that one day this man would return to India and lead us in a

similar movement against British rule. *Bapu* or father, as we affectionately called him, was then known only as *Karmavir* Gandhi. Later, he was revered as the *Mahatma*.

2

By the time I had made my second mental acquaintance with Gandhiji, I felt I understood him better, and hence felt drawn to him. After my narrow escape from becoming involved in the Banaras Conspiracy Case towards the end of 1915 and being impelled by the zeal to propagate revolutionary ideas, I found myself engaged as a teacher in the township of Ramgarh in the Shekhawati area of Jaipur State. This necessitated my foregoing a scholarship for going to Japan and also the completion of my college education.

There was more freedom here than in Jaipur because it was more or less free from detective activities and repressive pressure of the State, and the rich Marwadi community brought from Bombay and Calcutta news of doings in those places. But the discriminatory behaviour of the capitalist class and my socialism and self-respect were in disharmony with each other. Just at that time, a young Bengali had shot dead a Deputy Superintendent of the C. I. D. at Calcutta. Such incidents were often happening in Bengal. Gandhiji had already returned to India. During one of his addresses delivered to the students at Calcutta, he condemned terrorist activities as well as the repressive policy of the Government. His action, signifying a double-edged courage, made an impression upon my mind. I felt the pull of Gandhiji's personality and his activities.

3

Not long after, Ramgarh witnessed a local feud between the Poddar and Khemka families regarding their respective social status and influence with the ruling house. The chieftain of Sikar, who was also the chief of Ramgarh, once decided a point of dispute in such a way that the Khemkas considered it an act of partiality in favour of the Poddars and an insult to themselves. According to the law of the day, no civil appeal lay with the ruler of Jaipur against the orders of his feudatory at Sikar. The Khemkas, therefore decided to migrate from the State. I can clearly recall cart-loads of their luggage and other effects moving out of Ramgarh, while the whole town collected to witness the departure with tears in their eyes. This moved the Poddars who withdrew their claim, and beseeched the Khemkas to return. Apart from the success that I sometimes had in moving my parents' heart by going hungry, this was the second experiment which influenced me greatly—in favour of Bapu's ideal of winning over the heart of the opponent by undergoing voluntary suffering.

4

It was at Ramgarh that I met Seth Jamnalal Bajaj for the first time. He was impressed with my method of teaching history from the national point of view. In those days, it was rare and remarkable to find nationalistic tendencies in a young Marwadi. I had a talk with Shri Bajaj and he invited me to Wardha. Shri Chhotelal Jain, the leader of our group, had abjured

violence, and was already in Bapu's fold working at Champaran under his guidance. In July, 1917, I gave up teaching. On reaching my native home, Neem-ka-Thana, I informed both Jamnalalji and Chhotelalji of this change in my circumstances, and I received cordial invitations from both the places.

But I was thrilled when I found that it was not Shri Chhotelal but Gandhiji himself who had replied to me, in his own hand, in Hindi! I remember that the writing was not particularly good, and neither was the language any better. But I considered it an honour to receive a letter from him. He asked about my needs and when I could report at Champaran. I answered both points and added that Jamnalalji had also invited me. Bapu replied that he accepted my terms but that he believed in the Biblical maxim, 'thy need is greater than mine' and advised me to proceed to Wardha. My demands were slightly on the high side, considering those days, but Bapu's acceptance of those *in toto* and his magnanimous regard for Jamnalalji's need in preference to his own made a deep impression upon my mind.

5

I went to Wardha but I was worried lest the knowledge of my terroristic ideas had deterred Gandhiji from asking me to work under him directly. My fear, however, was dispelled later by Chhotelalji when we met after many years. He said Bapu liked men with revolutionary ideas as he believed that they possessed vivacity and tenacity, and that many of his foremost associates were former revolutionaries. I also came to know that Chhotelalji had spoken fairly well of me and that Bapu had inquired if I would be able to overcome social prejudices

such as untouchability. On being told 'yes', Bapu was pleased as well as surprised because it was a lot to expect from a Marwadi in those days. On my part, after my first contact with Shri Arjunlal Sethi, I had given up all prejudice against touching anybody or eating food prepared by Mohammedans, "untouchables" or others.

6

In 1917, the Congress session was to be held at Calcutta. I was working in the Marwadi Education Society under the guidance of Seth Jamnalal Bajaj and Shrikrishnadas Jaju. Sethji always encouraged Marwadi young men who had patriotic ideas and aptitudes for social reform. He took me to Calcutta along with Jajuji. As chance would have it, Gandhiji was also travelling in a third class compartment of the same train. Bare-headed, dressed in coarse 'Khadi' and wearing zinc-framed spectacles, he was absorbed in reading. He had a dark complexion and his ears were long and prominent, making him look ugly. Yet, his personality cast a spell over me and I felt important for merely having seen him.

7

As we passed Nagpur, Jajuji, out of curiosity, went to Gandhiji's compartment. He asked him, "Why can't you do the same work in India as you have done in Africa?" Gandhiji answered, "Given the cause and a leader, the same can be done here." This pregnant answer satisfied a serene and thoughtful person like Jajuji, and travelled deep down into me.

8

Bapu was made to stay in Calcutta in the newly built house of the Maheshwari Vidyalaya. Jamnalalji deputed me to look to his needs. I considered this a good opportunity to be of service to him. As Bapu emerged with soap, *lota* (jug) and a change of clothes in his hands for a bath, I leapt forward and offered to carry those things for him. He at once said, "No, no. They are not heavy." I then requested if I might be allowed to wash the clothes for him and he replied, "I do it myself every day." This simplicity of nature, and this habit of self-reliance, in such an important man was an unusual trait—in the context of the social structure of those days—and could be found only in truly great men. When I reminded Bapu of the correspondence I had had with him when he was at Champaran, he at once said, "I see, it was about you that Chhotelal had told me. Isn't it?"

9

I attended the Congress session. This was my first chance to witness an occasion of this kind. The Indian political scene was dominated in those days by three powerful personalities. Mrs. Annie Besant, who had just been released from internment, was the President of the session and the motive power behind the Home Rule Movement. Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak was the idol of nationalist India and commanded the highest influence. Karmavir Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was the hero of the South African and the Champaran campaigns and the rising sun of

the new day. While these three, and the great Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya were dressed in Indian style, the other leaders appeared in foreign dress. Gandhiji, bare-footed, dressed in coarse 'Khadi', with a massive Kathiawadi turban on his head was indeed the focus of attention! When he rose to deliver his address, in Hindi, all eyes and ears were turned towards him. I myself felt as if under a spell of hypnosis. At the end, he gave the gist of his speech in English also in response to the wish of the non-Hindi-speaking section of the audience.

10

At the conclusion of the session, the Marwadi community presented an address to Gandhiji. This function was held in the Maheshwari Vidyalaya. It was evening, and the hall was full to capacity. I remember one of the sentences that he uttered. "It is better to burn the institution rather than keep it in an unclean atmosphere of this kind." He was referring to the moral as well as the physical uncleanliness of the largest Indian city. In an atmosphere where flattery flourished, and where the truth was seldom heard, a bold statement like this was something which shocked one into taking notice of what he said.

11

Jamnalalji was unwell in the summer of 1918. One day, he was relaxing on the roof of his firm, Messrs Bachhraj and Co. I was sitting by his side. Presently, Gandhiji and another gentleman, with an amputated arm, arrived. I learnt afterwards that the gentleman accompanying Gandhiji was Shri Gokhale,

a retired engineer, and husband of Bapu's, co-worker the well-known Shrimati Avantikabai. The Mahatma was bare-footed, but this time he wore a *kurta* and cap instead of the traditional *angarkha* and turban. It was the first time that I saw what has now come to be known as the Gandhi cap. He had called to enquire after Jamnalalji's health. This was my first experience of Gandhiji's concern for the sick and ailing and his passion for nursing them.

From the conversation, I gathered that Gandhiji was going to preside over a function of the orphanage at Chinchwad near Poona. I expressed a desire to accompany him and Jamnalalji readily allowed me to do so and made the necessary arrangements. Perhaps he showed this indulgence in order to furnish me an opportunity to come into contact with Gandhiji, and thus better understand him. I was commissioned to carry fruit for him. Shri Mahadev Desai was also one of the company. We travelled in a third class compartment occupied mainly by Indian soldiers, who permitted Gandhiji to stretch himself on a wooden berth, but Mahadevbhai and I had to pay for it by sitting on the floor. The soldiers dealt roughly with other passengers, and this excited me, but Gandhiji was composed in his behaviour throughout. During the twenty-four hours I was with Bapu, I was impressed with his habits of neatness and modesty and with his sense of punctuality.

12

Since Gandhiji addressed me with the word *aap* (a form of address generally used when talking to equals or superiors) on a couple of occasions, I mustered up courage and said, "Can't you, sir, address me as *tum*?" (an informal word meant for inferiors or juni-

ors in age) Bapu smiled, and replied that such a time would come, but not just now. After some years, Bapu began addressing me, in correspondence, as *Chiramjiva.* It actually means: "May you live long," but conventionally, it is used for a son or a younger relation. In fact, he considered every inmate of the Ashram (establishment where he and his followers lived) his son or daughter, and affectionately addressed them as such. Gandhiji had an intense fellow-feeling for the inmates and imparted a family atmosphere to the life there. Few other leaders, in my opinion, possessed this ability to put people at ease in such a great measure as he. Next to him, Jamnalalji possessed this trait in a remarkable degree.

13

One of Bapu's actions created an adverse effect on my young mind. It was his support for recruitment to the British army in India. Like so many other young men, I too was enraged with the British. Hence, his co-operation added fuel to the fire, and I was convinced that this man was only fit to be a hermit and possessed no qualities of a political leader. But this attitude of mine did not last long. When he launched a campaign of non-violent non-co-operation, my regard for his acumen deepened. Subsequently, the non-violent, but open revolt against the Rowlatt Act, and the report of the Congress Enquiry Committee into the Punjab massacre, further heightened my admiration for him. Later, when the Allahabad Khilafat Conference approved of Bapu's plan of non-co-operation, confidence in Bapu's statesmanship began to grow upon me. I could not then perceive in his programmes of Hindu-Muslim unity and removal of untouchability, the finer points of the

ethical aspect, as something deep and meaningful. But, I did see a keen foresight that planned to strengthen the nation by taking advantage of the peculiar prevailing conditions and the inspiring circumstances, and the desire to strengthen Hindu society by weeding out its evils.

14

On the first of August, 1920, Lokamanya Tilak passed away. The revolutionary groups regarded him as their supporter and in open politics they followed him. Accordingly, I also had great respect for him. In those days I was working as the manager of the Swadeshi Bhandar (shop selling Indian-made goods) established by Jamnalalji. The day the news appeared in the *Bombay Chronicle* of the passing away of Tilak, I was laid up with fever. When I read the news in the paper, I am afraid I blubbered, as I did at the time of the deaths of my father and mother. So overcome with emotion was I! But the thought that at least in Gandhiji we had a successor to the Lokamanya somewhat consoled me. I have a faint recollection that Tilak had remarked somewhere that the country's interests were safe in the hands of Gandhiji, while Gandhiji himself had also felt that Lokamanya's mission should be carried on. His picture hung before me in my room. I seated myself on the bed, made obeisance to the portrait, and in his visionary presence, accepted Gandhiji as the nation's as well as my own leader, and took a vow to devote my life to the service of my country. This was principally an emotional decision but it was given the seal of an intellectual decision also when the special session of the Congress, held under the Presidentship of Lala Lajpatrai, approved of Gandhiji's non-co-operation

programme, The workers in the Indian States used to regard this programme as applicable to British India only; so did I. This notion of mine was corrected only at the Nagpur session of the Congress.

15

I met Gandhiji again in 1920 at the Congress session at Nagpur. Shri Vijaysinhji Pathik, the leader of the agrarian Satyagraha of Bijolia Jagir of Mewar, went to see the Mahatma in his camp. I accompanied him. I was in the habit of showing courtesy to elders by remaining modestly in the background. So I sat behind Pathikji. Bapu spotted me and inquired of Pathikji as to who I was. Pathikji replied, "He is the secretary of Rajasthan Seva Sangh and my esteemed colleague." As I lifted my face Gandhiji remarked, "You did meet me at Chinchwad." He had such a remarkable memory that in spite of keeping so busy and meeting thousands of people he remembered an insignificant person like me!

16

Pathikji consulted Bapu as to whether he should join the bigger movement being launched by him or continue to buttress the Bijolia revolt. "No", replied Bapu. "You should look to self-duty first. That too is my work and constitutes a contribution to the bigger sacrifice. Of course, you may enforce such of the items in your area as can be implemented in Indian States. But I must steal the question from you. I had already given you word to shoulder the responsibility of the Bijolia campaign. The non-co-operation movement is a later development. Logically, I must do the first

thing first. This is weighing upon my mind heavily. Only when you relieve me of this load, can I address myself to the bigger programme with an easy mind." Pathikji's heart gladdened with joy. The reply reflected a determination to honour the given word. It also revealed the man's detachment from self even in public life. In fact, Gandhiji had earlier deputed Mahadevbhai to visit Bijolia and find out facts for him. He was convinced that the peasants' grievances were genuine. Bapu had therefore promised that if the Maharana (ruler) would not redress the grievances, he would, personally, lead the campaign. I realized for the first time that it is more important to honour one's word regardless of the importance, or otherwise, of conflicting engagements. I too felt that it was inopportune to launch the programme chalked out for British India in Indian States *in toto*.

17

Three things struck me as remarkable in the Constitution of the Congress which was prepared under Bapu's guidance, and which was passed by the Nagpur session. The first was that Indian States were also included in the concept of freedom for the country. Not long ago we had established the Rajasthan Seva Sangh and had taken a vow to serve the people of the Indian States politically. Amongst the workers of the Indian States there was a section, and I belonged to it, who suspected that after attaining power for themselves, the leaders of British India would negotiate agreements with the rulers and would forsake us to take care of ourselves. This would result not only in the perpetuation of the mediaeval types of Governments but also in strengthening them. But Gandhiji wiped out all our doubts by

including the States in the Charter of Declaration of the Constitution of the greatest political body fighting for the liberation of the country.

The second point that appealed to me was the distribution of provinces on a linguistic basis. In the course of my duties, I used to do all my work through the medium of my mother tongue, the Rajasthani language. I found it indispensable in the interest of my work. I was more at home in it than in plain or literary Hindi. And I had an instinctive love for it. Therefore, the distribution of provinces on a linguistic basis appealed to me as both equitable and practical.

The third point concerned my own sphere of activities. Bapu combined Rajputana, Madhya Bharat and Ajmer into one province. This was done for the first time in our history, and it gave us great satisfaction from the point of oneness of Rajasthan. As a result, I acknowledged Gandhiji, by both reason and sentiment, as the sole leader of the entire nation. I remember the joy I felt on the passing of this resolution.

18

Shri Mohammad Ali Jinnah rose to speak - on a motion. Bapu had, by now, come to be known as Mahatma Gandhi. Shri Jinnah spoke in English and referred to Gandhiji as Mr. Gandhi. To this Maulana Mohammad Ali objected and requested Shri Jinnah to refer to Gandhiji as Mahatma Gandhi. The delegates and visitors also shouted, "Plesase say Mahatma Gandhi, not Mr. Gandhi." As Shri Jinnah insisted, the audience cried, "Sit down." Shri Jinnah even ignored the advice of the aged President, Shri Vijayraghavachari, who suggested that Shri Jinnah should respect the sentiments of the audience. At this stage, Gandhiji

stood up and said, "I am not a Mahatma. I am an ordinary man. By coercing Jinnah Saheb to a particular choice of word, you are not doing me honour. We cannot win real freedom by forcing our views upon others. As long as there is nothing objectionable or derogatory in a man's language, he is at liberty to think or say whatever he likes about others." The people were thus pacified. This was my first experience to judge the Mahatmaji's sense of humility and the depth of the people's regard for him, and I profited by it.

19

There were two things which I disliked at the Nagpur session. The first of them was that Gandhiji gave greater importance to the new-entrant, Pt. Motilal Nehru, than to the stalwart Lala Lajpatrai. The second, was Shri Jamnalalji's acceptance of the chairmanship of the Reception Committee, disregarding Dr. Moonje. I perceived short-sightedness in this policy although, from the personal point of view, I was closer to Jamnalalji and felt a sense of pride in his becoming the Chairman. I discussed the matter with him, and he said, "From the point of view of work, Dr. Moonje does not have as much faith in Bapu's programme as I have, and that is why I considered it my duty to accept the vote of the majority". But fear continued to haunt me that this would react unfavourably on Maharashtra which had been deprived of leadership by the recent death of Lokamanya Tilak, and that Bapu would not get the co-operation which he deserved to get. About in 1940 or 1941, Gandhiji was preparing to write extensively on the Khaksar movement when I reminded him that seeds of this had been sown at Nagpur which had resulted in Dr. Hedgewar going to Germany, like the

Khaksar leader, Allama Mashriqi, and learning the Fascist ideology and methods of organization, and in subsequently organizing the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh movement. Personally, I feel that the ultimate assassination of the Mahatma was the result of the maturing of these seeds.

20

Bapu's experiment in mass Satyagraha was first tried, independently, in Bijolia. While the campaign had his tacit blessings in the beginning, it received his direct guidance and help later. The feudatory chief of Bijolia in Mewar extorted excessive taxes and sub-taxes from the peasants and took forced labour from them without payment for the same. He enjoyed the revenue, as well as criminal and civil judicial powers. The area had a population of about fifteen thousand. People seethed with discontent and misery. The discontent was brought to a head by the arbitrary and enforced collection of war loans by the chieftain. In the meanwhile, Shri Pathik, an absconder of the Banaras Conspiracy Case, appeared on the scene. In an incredibly short time he organized the peasants and assumed leadership of non-violent opposition to the chief. His policy admitted both the secrecy of the revolutionaries and the openness of the Mahatma. There was danger of the collapse of the movement because of the tyrannical repression of the irresponsible chief and the weakness of the down-trodden people, if the leaders were arrested. Pathikji, therefore, considered it necessary to work underground. But the peasant movement was open and non-violent. Pathikji had sought an introduction to Gandhiji through Jamnalalji. Bapu had ascertained the facts by holding an

on-the-spot inquiry through Mahadevbhai who was the first outsider to go boldly to Bijolia. He found the grievances of the Kisans (peasants) just. In those days the Dewan (chief minister) of Mewar State was Shri Ramakant, a son of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, another great leader. Gandhiji pleaded with the ruler of Mewar, Maharana Fatehsinh, through Ramakantji to do justice by the Kisans. He also told Pathikji that if the Kisans failed to get justice he would himself lead the movement.

The main programme of the movement was: disobedience of the orders of the Jagirdar (the chief), non-payment of taxes and non-co-operation with the police and the judiciary. As the struggle lasted three to four years, people gave up the habit of drinking, postponed all marriages and death dinners, did not cultivate land, and boycotted the courts. The Jagirdar could not realize taxes. The Kisans, however, cultivated lands outside the boundaries of the chief in order to keep going. The atmosphere resounded with slogans of *Vande Mataram* (I bow to Mother India). Men, women and children adopted the slogan as a word of greeting. Everybody was a member of the Kisan Panchayat. It was a wide-spread and strong organization with strict discipline. It had opened schools of its own. Social reform, Swadeshi (use of Indian made articles) and sanitation programmes were all in operation. It will thus be observed that all these activities, crusading as well as creative, bore the stamp of Bapu's systematic method of work.

21

Whenever a big problem arose, or a big move was contemplated, Pathikji invariably consulted Gandhiji prior to making decisions or taking steps. Four years of successful campaign had begun to tell heavily upon the Jagirdar's purse and prestige. He sent word that he was ready to compromise. Bapu was at Delhi. Pathikji and I met him there. He was staying as a guest of his Christian friend, Principal Rudra, and had now begun to recognize me. It was my fourth meeting with him. He welcomed the suggestion of a settlement but directed that henceforth whoever went to Bijolia should live and work there openly. I was, therefore, detailed to proceed to Bijolia. I noticed that, although the movement was not run in the name of Gandhiji, but under his advice and guidance, yet it caused the Jagirdar much worry and embarrassment. Still he and his officials cherished great respect for the Mahatma. I was deeply impressed by the influence and the result of this non-violent struggle in miniature in Bijolia, and I became a life convert to this philosophy—abjuring all faith in violence, and untruth.

22

Impressed by Gandhiji's missionary methods of work, Pathikji, myself and a few other workers constituted ourselves into a cadre of life workers, and created what is known as the Rajasthan Seva Sangh. We had no doubt heard of Shri Gokhale's Servants of India Society but that was an organization of moderates, and we used to become irritated at the very mention of its name. So, we ignored it. We studied the working of

Bapu's Ashram and leaving apart the purely spiritual part of it, we imbibed the rest. In the ordinary course, sensible and spirited persons can always contribute to the good of a cause whether they are snug in the lap of plenty, holding strings of power or busy with their normal vocations; yet, such persons are exceptions and are handicapped with limitations upon their time. Whether it is a question of winning feedom for a country, of rescuing the nation from the curse of disease, poverty or ignorance, or of reconstructing it, it becomes obligatory to secure the services of such devoted persons, whose one aim in life is the attainment of the above objectives, and whose energies are directed exclusively towards their attainment. Such hermits and missionaries could be drawn only from among persons who could maintain themselves on the barest minimum. Such individuals are expected to be above the inducements of wealth, personal property, and communal taints. We launched ourselves into this pattern of life.

I surrendered my right to the paternal immoveable property. All members of the Sangh received a subsistence allowance at the rate of fifteen rupees per month for each of the dependent members of their families. Even then, if we saved something, after meeting the necessary expenses, we returned the saving to the Sangh. Thus, inspired by the programme, fervour and ideal, we stepped into the sphere of complete service to the people of Rajasthan. The responsibility of the Bijolia Satyagraha now shifted from the shoulders of Pathikji to those of the members of the Sangh. All this happened in November of 1920.

Anjanadevi, my wife, was a source of strength to me in deciding to adopt new ways of life. She had, by now, met Bapu twice at Wardha, and she took the

pledge to discard jewellery and to use only Khadi (hand-woven cloth made from hand-spun yarn) for the rest of her life. This pledge has remained unbroken till today.

23

As a result of Jamnalalji's munificence, we published from Wardha, after the Calcutta session of the Congress, a Hindi weekly named *Rajasthan Kesari*. I was chosen as its publisher and joint editor. Under the law of the day, the entire legal responsibility lay with the publisher and not with the editor whose name it was not necessary to print on the copies.

On the one hand, *Rajasthan Kesari* used to expose the high-handedness of the Indian States and, on the other, it supported the non-co-operation movement of Gandhiji. Our group took a leading part in non-violent and non-co-operation activities and, as a matter of fact, our office in Wardha became an important centre for the prosecution of the non-co-operation programme. It was, therefore, natural for the Government to be irritated. The Deputy Commissioner of Wardha was a learned Indian gentleman. He was not prepared to take direct responsibility and initiative for embarking upon a policy of repression. He, therefore, instigated a notorious sub-Inspector of Police, who had indulged in ruthlessness in a rural area and against whom a certain news had appeared in the *Rajasthan Kesari*, to file defamation proceedings against the weekly. As a result, Shri Satyadeva Vidyalankar and I were thrown in prison for three months each.

We were surprised at the extent of Bapu's influence on the jail officials. The Jailor, a Madrasi, warmly

welcomed us. The Superintendent was an elderly Bengali gentleman, a Civil Surgeon by rank. We were astonished at his courteous treatment of us. On his first meeting, he bowed his head. Later, he offered courteous greetings whenever we met. We often expressed our embarrassment; more so on account of his age. At this he would say, "You gentlemen are undergoing sufferings for the country, and are followers of Mahatma Gandhi. Can't we do even this much to offer respect to you?" It was this regard of the prison authorities for Bapu which was instrumental in our getting the facilities of "A" class prisoners in practice although formally we were in "C" class. We frequently went out for walks in the prison garden in the company of the Jailor and breakfasted with him in his quarters. We helped his correspondence in the Jail office and swam in the reservoir-like prison well! So much so, that we even wrote articles for our weekly and had visitors at any time. The time for the Ahmedabad session of the Congress was drawing near. According to our calculations, the date of our release was to fall a day after the termination of the session. The Superintendent of the Jail kindly remitted our term by a few days so that we reached the session in time, and that too at Government expense! Such was the spell of Bapu's influence which instilled virtue imperceptibly in people's minds. I reflected that whereas politicians were criticized by their own followers, saints were respected even by their opponents.

24

The Ahmedabad session was a novel experience. In the past, the sessions used to be held under decorated *pandals* (awnings) in the heart of the city, and guests and visitors were accommodated in hotels; chairs were provided in the *pandals*. But this time, a Gandhi-style session was held in the open, outside the town. The stage was made out of reeds and covered with Khadi, and huts for the guests were also made in a similar manner. The urinals and latrines consisted of trenches dug in the ground and privacy was provided by reed screens. Anybody who used them was expected to cover the excreta with earth which had been dug out and heaped on the site. They were cleaned by volunteers deputed for the purpose. The Congress town had its own water works and mess arrangements so that the food served was simple and clean. The Khadi Exhibition, folk dances and songs and the popular use of Hindustani were witnessed for the first time. Instead of sitting upon chairs, the leaders sat on the stage with pillow rests at the back while delegates and visitors squatted on the floor. Khadi was everywhere in evidence. All these features were a departure from convention, and they heralded the approach of the Gandhian era.

On this occasion, I could not meet Bapu but only see him. But I met Chhotelalji after a lapse of about six years. He presented me with an autographed copy of the Ashram hymn book which I still treasure as a precious memento. The other important event was my introduction to the late Shri Maganlal Gandhi through the good offices of Shri Chhotelal. The meeting was short and it happened to be the last, but his qualities

of simplicity, brevity, dignity and sincerity immediately captivated me. I also became acquainted with Shri Manilal Kothari. This acquaintance later developed into intimacy. He collected funds for Gandhiji's programmes and, on that account, he came to be known, in Gandhian circles, as *Bhikshuraja* (king of beggars). He was affectionate and sincere, and took great interest in Rajasthan affairs. When the Bhils of Sirohi were the victims of official firing, Bapu deputed Kothariji for enquiry and relief work. On the basis of his report, Gandhiji wrote a comment in *Young India* which proved beneficial for the Bhils and an encouragement to the workers in the States.

The greatest influence which Bapu wielded upon me was on the occasion of my visit to the Sabarmati Satyagraha Ashram. Chhotelalji showed me all the activities of the institution. Although the Ashram had been established only a short time ago, yet the separate hutments under the shade of trees on the bank of the Sabarmati river, a common mess, farms, dairy, spinning and weaving, national education, equal status of men and women, freedom, discipline and an atmosphere of plain living — all these convinced me that Gandhiji was a practical idealist and that he was putting into practice all the items of social reconstruction along with his other activities. The Ashram impressed me so much that I could not help remarking to Chhotelalji as I took leave of him; "I shall have to join you sooner or later." This did happen ten years later.

25

In those days, the Congress, as an organization, was not as well known as Gandhiji as a person. Legends had begun to circulate that the Mahatma was an incarnation or a phenomenon. Although political and relief and other educative activities were being carried on in Rajasthan by the Seva Sangh workers, people in general, particularly in the countryside, as also those in power, considered us agents of Gandhiji. This belief constituted the main factor in the popularity of the workers and people's faith in them. The hurricane of the non-co-operation movement that was sweeping over British India had, as yet, no direct bearing on the States' people, but, indirectly inspired and vitalized by its influence, they joined the struggle *en masse*, thus throwing off the dual servitude under which they had laboured for centuries. They stopped payment of illegal levies, compulsory free labour and excessive land revenue. They also gave up drinking, and a movement for social reform took birth. Many people entered a totally new phase of life. Those who led a life of indulgence became austere and those who were timid became bold.

26

A remarkable example deserves mention. On my return from the Ahmedabad session I went to Begun, a Jagir area adjoining Bijolia. I found the people of that Jagir also bubbling with life and new enthusiasm. Startled at this awakening, a younger brother of the Thakur (chieftain) of Ravarda degraded himself by even ill-treating women. One day, he had a *mali*

(gardener) woman dragged through the bazar and a Bhil woman hung by her feet and belaboured. The Kisans would not brook this, and went in a mob to the Thakur's house. The Thakur levelled his loaded gun at them. Firing and consequent repercussions were about to start when one Ramnivas Sharma, a literate young village worker, who had been influenced by Bapu's personality and movement, came forward. He shouted the slogan, *Mahatma Gandhiki Jai* (Victory to Mahatma Gandhi) and the crowd repeated the same. With one hand he beckoned them to keep calm and with the other he laid bare his breast before the Thakur. This act of non-violent valour resulted in moving the heart of the Thakur, at least for the time being. The women were released. The people returned home with the buoyancy of victory and a sense of inner strength.

27

Another instance will show how Bapu influenced even the hearts of burglars and dacoits. I was at Bijolia. To reach there, one has to climb through Singoli area of Gwalior State, which was a thick jungle, and was considered a stronghold of dacoits and waylayers. It was dangerous to pass through it without an armed bodyguard. One day a goldsmith made humble salutations to me and expressed feelings of great gratitude. I was puzzled and could not make out what it was about. When I questioned him, he revealed that on the previous day he had been surrounded by dacoits in the Singoli hillocks. He had greeted them with *Vande Mataram*, showed them his Khadi clothes, and said that he was Mahatma Gandhi's man. Thereupon the dacoits withdrew leaving him untouched. Once I was also passing that way in the company of

some Kisans. Some armed men advanced towards us. The Kisans at once surmised who were approaching. They shouted, *Mahatma Gandhiki Jai*. Hearing this, the armed persons refrained from molesting us. According to our culture, it is taboo for dacoits to commit violence upon women, *brahmins* and *sadhus* (holy men). Gandhiji's influence had made them include social workers and their adherents also among those entitled to this immunity.

28

It was 1921. Some differences of opinion cropped up between Pathikji and some Congressmen at Ajmer at this time. Deenabandhu (brother of the distressed) C. F. Andrews was leading a country-wide campaign against *begar* (forced free labour) which he characterized as 'modern slavery'. We invited Deenabandhu to visit Rajasthan. He accepted the invitation and the programme and dates were fixed. In the meanwhile, the local Congressmen must have written to Deenabandhu against Pathikji, who had been introduced to him by Gandhiji on a previous occasion. Therefore, Deenabandhu wanted to know more about Pathikji from Bapu. I am reproducing below, in his own words, what Shri Banarasidas Chaturvedi had written with regard to this incident:

> Mahatma Gandhi and Andrews, the lover of India, were talking together at the house of Deshabandhu (lover of the motherland) C. R. Das. I was listening to the conversation. After some time, Shri Andrews inquired, "Where is Mahadev?" Mahatmaji replied, "He has gone out. Do you want him?" "Yes, I want to ask him about Pathik. Who is he? What sort of man is he?" Bapu, with a smile, said: "I can tell you something about Pathik. Pathik is a worker while others are but talkers. Pathik is a soldier,

brave but impetuous, and obstinate. He was Mahadev's infallible guide in Bijolia and the remarkable thing is that the masses of Bijolia have implicit confidence in him."

Mahatma Gandhi possessed an uncanny understanding of human nature. But in this case, I discerned a sense of appreciation of virtue, a sense of justice, and thereby a desire to help the worker rather than a mere understanding of the foibles of human nature. On the one hand, there were the Congress workers carrying out Bapu's own programme directly, while, on the other, there was an individual who was prosecuting his programme only indirectly. Still he gave proof of his high sense of justice in a few words, and this lent great courage to our humble band of workers.

29

It must have been in 1924. The battle of Bijolia had been won and an agreement had been drawn up. We had started constructive work among the people. Jethalalbhai was organizing and propagating the use of self-sufficient Khadi. The Rajasthan Seva Sangh had launched a programme to remove illiteracy, social evils, alcoholism, untouchability etc. Anjanadevi was working among women. I was supervising this work in the capacity of the Sangh's secretary. On account of the nearness of the hills and the game preserves of the Jagirdar, wild boars and deer worked havoc in the adjoining fields and the Kisans were both annoyed and desperate at the loss. They consulted me about shooting them. I had not yet been completely converted to the creed of non-violence. But I did not want the Kisans to indulge in violence. I, therefore, enquired of Bapu, if the animals could be killed. To the best of my recollection, he

replied that animals which harmed crops, essential for the maintenance of human life could be killed, and that this constituted unavoidable violence. This opinion assured me of his being a practical idealist.

30

In 1925, the Congress session was held at Kanpur. There, I saw Bapu in a new light. In the delegates' elections at Ajmer, Shri Arjunlal Sethi's group emerged victorious. But the higher authorities annulled the elections, and the delegates were unable to gain entry to the session. Sethiji considered this action unjust. He reached Kanpur and tried unsuccessfully to gain entry into the *pandal*. Eventually, he posted himself outside it and went on a fast. When Gandhiji heard of this he went to the place. Though India's most important leader was being showered with abuses and angry words, he was smiling and gentle, persuading the protesters to be tranquil and assuring them of full justice after the session was over. I realized for the first time, how forbearing and composed Gandhiji was.

31

In those days, the Indian States' people's movement was hardly noticeable as an all-India one. Only three organizations were working in the field: the Rajasthan Seva Sangh in Rajasthan, the Saurashtra group in Kathiawad and workers of the Servants of India Society in Maharashtra. The first of these was openly leading the agitation of the village people but it did not countenance interference by the British Power in the affairs of the States. Saurashtra did have a pronounced tone but it did not mind the British Government meddling

in the affairs of the Indian States, and its activities were confined mainly in cities. The Maharashtra group's activities revolved around the British Government's interference in such affairs. These three elements met to confer under the name of the Indian States' People's Conference on the occasion of the Kanpur session. It was, on the whole, a poor show. They had neither an organization, nor a well-defined policy nor even a programme.

The Neemuchana massacre had taken place a few months previous to the holding of this conference. The tragedy which occurred in Alwar State could be compared to the Jalianwala Bagh carnage of British India. Until then, Bapu was undecided about work in the Indian States. In spite of this, he condemned the double-loaded autocracy of Indian States and British bureaucracy by writing a comment in *Young India* under the title: "My Incapacity" This soothed our bruised hearts. He wrote as follows:

> I have no data to go upon. Alwar can laugh with as much disdain as the Nizam at anything I may say or write. If all the reports that are published are true, they are proof of "dyerism double distilled." But I know that I have for the moment no remedy. I watch with admiration the effort of the Press to secure at least a decent public inquiry into the awful allegations.
>
> *Young India*, 2-7-'25, pp. 232-33

Bapu not only voiced public sentiment by writing the above note, but also addressed an implied warning to the powers of tyranny that, although he was silent, he was not sleeping, and that his sympathies were with the oppressed.

32

Even more inspiring than the above comment was the message he gave on the occasion of the Indian States' People's Conference at Kanpur. It was written in Hindi, in his own hand, and read as follows:

"Every man can cut asunder the chains that bind him. If we grasp this simple truth and act accordingly, we can dig at the root of all troubles. No tyrant has been successful without the help of the victim. How useful it could be if we could learn this much!"

Bapu's teaching of non-co-operation with evil gave us strength in that hour of despondency. Even they who believed in leaning on the British interference benefitted from his teaching.

33

It was his day of silence. Yet when the late Shri Manilal Kothari and I approached him, he drafted for us the following resolution to be passed at the Conference in connection with Neemuchana:

This Conference of the Indian States' People places on record its sense of horror at the happenings of Neemuchana in Alwar State, and more so at the persistent refusal of the State authorities to institute an open and impartial enquiry into the lawlessness and atrocities indulged in by the police and other officials.

This Conference further places on record its sense of profound sympathy for the bereaved families, the wounded and those who have been deprived of their hearth and home without provocation in the name of law and order, and desires to render effective service to the people of Neemuchana in this hour of their suffering.

It is clear from the draft that, on the one hand, Bapu was in favour of coming to conclusions after going

through an impartial enquiry and, that on the other, he was not content with merely showing lip sympathy to the sufferers but expected the workers to render them substantial relief. He always felt profoundly for the oppressed. This was my fifth meeting with him.

34

The great reformer, Gandhiji, touched on all important aspects of human society. It was, therefore, natural for him to devote attention to an important social and religious institution like marriage. He evolved a terse, simple, austere and economical ceremonial. To the best of my recollection, the first occasion to put it into practice came on the 26th February, 1926. It was the occasion of the wedding of Jamnalalji's eldest daughter, Kamala. Jamnalalji was himself an ardent social reformer. His concept of social reform did not consist of merely introducing Western ideas but bore the stamp of Indian moralism. He wanted to solemnize the function in the presence, and under the guidance, of Bapu. Among the few friends he invited were Anjanadevi and myself. If I remember aright Gandhiji had his ideas on this subject put in writing for the first time, by Kaka Kalelkar. The ceremony was solemnized by the music teacher of the Ashram, the late Pandit Narayan Moreshwar Khare. The recital consisted of only *Saptapadi* (the vedic text of the seven steps) and it was over in an hour. The bride and the bridegroom garlanded each other and touched the feet of the elders who were present. No other ceremony was gone through. To invoke the Mahatma's blessings on such occasions was a tough job. The couple had each to take a heavy thump on their back!

Later, Bapu imposed conditions for giving blessings. The marriage had either to be inter-caste, inter-provincial, or a widow re-marriage, or marriage with a Harijan boy or girl. He blessed an engagement by taking a pledge from both the parties to the effect that they would not enter into wedlock for five years or until after *Swaraj* (Independence) was won (whichever fell earlier) and would keep love untainted till then.

The story of how Gandhiji imposed upon one of his near ones the condition of complete detachment with his beloved girl—not to speak of remaining a bachelor for several years—in order to test the purity of his love is well known. Bapu had extracted a promise from another relation to observe continence for a few years after the wedding. These restraints were readily and willingly accepted and the persons concerned drew great strength from the rigid example of the teacher himself.

In the case of Kamala, as far as I know, Bapu had something to do only in connection with her wedding; he had no hand in her engagement. Two weddings took place after Kamala's, and in these cases, he took an interest in the engagements also. I was at the Sabarmati Ashram in those days. One of them was between Rukmini, the younger daughter of the late Maganlalbhai, and Banarasilal Bajaj, a relative of Shri Jamnalal Bajaj, and the other one was between Shri Shankarlal Agrawal of Udaipur and Umiyabehn, daughter of Jayasukhlal Gandhi. These engagements materialized through the good offices of Jamnalalji. Later on, he was instrumental in effecting so many engagements that he came to be known as *Shadilalji* (the marriage-negotiater).

35

From the manner in which the above engagements took place, I realized that Bapu's method was a blend of the Western and Indian systems. It consisted wholly neither of the orthodox fashion of inflicting a boy or a girl upon the other according to the whims of the parents, nor of the open courtship which was often a result of unbridled passion. According to his method, the parents and relatives of one party should make inquiries about the status, culture, temperament and character of the other, and vice versa, and should tender advice to the boy or the girl, as the case may be, but leave the final decision in their hands. This method appealed to me because it gave the young ones the advantage of mature advice based upon personal investigation and knowledge while the ultimate choice remained in the hands of those with whom it is a question of life-partnership.

36

Kamala Bajaj was married to Rameshwar Nevatia, a graduate of the Gujarat Vidyapith. I gave a summary of Bapu's benediction in our Hindi weekly *Tarun Rajasthan*. It read as follows:

> The Hindu custom makes marriage a too showy affair. It is considered a legitimate occasion for merry-making, revelry and the like. The solemn part of it, for which the ceremony is performed, is relegated to insignificance. Too much money is spent, so it makes marriage a burden for the poor. Some people get so heavily into debt that it becomes impossible for them to redeem themselves. The wedding, which permits so much show and extravangance, and the ceremony content so very imperfect, cannot

be expected to induce the couple to lead a life of restraint. The ideal of this Ashram is to lead a life of purity. But adherents of Ahimsa do not enforce compulsion upon anybody. Under such circumstances those, who lack complete self-control, should marry. It is also a duty to bless such people and thus introduce a healthy practice. In India and elsewhere wherever there is an element of religion in marriage, there is also the element of self-restraint. The Smritis say that couples who live with restraint are as good as *brahmacharis* (celibates). Those who cannot have complete mastery over their passions can, at least, exercise a certain degree of restraint.

The Marwari community is rich and hence can spend much on marriages, but it makes the burden almost unbearable for the poor. Fireworks, feasts, dancing, and illuminations are considered essential to weddings. You can, therefore, imagine how much responsibility rests on the shoulders of the rich. The effects are seen not only on the Marwari community and the Hindus but also upon the Musalman and other communities. In spite of there being money and vice in the Marwari community, there is love for religion. So, Jamnalalji and I thought that the wedding should be solemnized in a simple way. Accordingly, you will notice that there will not be ostentation, dance and music, but only the religious ceremony. You should therefore agree to it, witness it and pledge to copy it. In India, a handful of people are rich and the rest are destitutes. In no other country do so many people die of starvation, suffer hardship and lead lifeless existence as in India. This has been admitted even by Government historians. The multi-millionaires of such a poverty-ridden country have no right to conduct themselves in a way that may cause heart-burning among the poor. The rich earn money by further impoverishing the poor. Under these circumstances, only a limited sum of money, necessary for discharging ceremonial obligations, should be spent, and the rest should be utilized for charitable purposes. From this point of view this wedding is worth emulating. It is

not an ordinary reform. It bears long shoots. Jamnalalji has not spent money although he has it. This will produce good results because it is said in the Gita that the common people copy what better-placed people do. Rameshwar and Kamala are intelligent. They will understand that marriage does not give licence for indulgence. Married life is intended to enable one to go in for higher pursuits. Indulgence is permissible only for begetting progeny. I want to counsel Rameshwar that a wife is not the slave of the husband; she is an equal partner materially and morally, and is a friend.

I want to liken this couple, ideally, to Shiv-Parvati, Savitri-Satyavan or Sita-Ram. Women enjoy a very high place in society according to Hindu tenets. I bless both of them that they may enjoy a long life, may earn a name for their elders, may protect faith and serve the country.

37

Shankarlal Agrawal and Umiya were married on the 4th December, 1929. This marriage occurred not only between persons of different provinces but also between persons of different sub-castes. Agrawals and Modhs do not normally intermarry. There were other notable points as well with regard to this wedlock. Shri Shankarlal was about 25 and Umiya about 18. The marriage was arranged with the concurrence of both. The whole ceremony was gone through in 45 minutes. The couple wore Khadi habitually, but the members of the bridegroom's party, who came from Udaipur in Mewar, also wore Khadi. The guests were served the same austere meals which are normally served to the *Ashramites*. Except for the actual ceremony, nobody knew that there was a festive occasion on. It was Bapu's desire that the Ashram inmates should reach that standard of detachment when they attend either

a wedding or a funeral service without feeling emotion. Birth, death and marriage should be accepted as normal features of our existence and not as unusual occurrences. In view of this teaching, there was no departure from the daily routine of life. On the day of the wedding, the bridegroom and the bride went through all the daily duties, religious as well as social. They fasted, offered cow-worship and Tulsi-worship, took part in community conservancy operations, such as cleaning of the surroundings of the well and unclean spots in the dairy, did spinning, read the Gita etc. In the evening, the marriage ceremony was performed. It consisted of *Madhupark*, *Kanyadana* and *Saptapadi*. Bapu blessed the couple in the morning and evening at the time of prayers. His words were reproduced in a monthly journal, along with the above account, as follows:

> It might be argued how do an Ashram and the performing of a marriage go together? My reply is that the two are not contradictory to each other. Those who can exercise control over the self should do so; those who cannot, may marry. This is proper. None need think that those who practise self-control are pure and those who marry are all impure. It is possible that a married person may be virtuous and a bachelor a hypocrite. This is why we consider marriage desirable, though unnecessary.
>
> In this marriage we have gone one step further. In Manilal's marriage we broke the caste barrier; in this we blast the provincial prejudices. From Gujarat we have come to Mewar. This is a good sign. This has added to our responsibility. Whichever marriage is performed here, we keep the duty aspect before us and we do it in a religious way. We adopt for ourselves a code of conduct. Considering the present conditions in these troubled times, if we can master the passion it will indeed be good. But we ought not to resort to compulsion. If, therefore, a boy or a girl so desires, a partner should be found, and they should be

blessed into wedlock. This is the duty of the Ashram. So far, we have been acting on this premise and the result has not been bad. We perform the wedding without pageantry, in a short time, and with pure minds. This is a matter of joy.

This marriage was preluded by uneasiness and anxiety which have now vanished. All possible precautions were taken. The bride and the bridegroom were both consulted. I have given importance to national interests over personal. Through this marriage one province has been drawn nearer to another. This is the first experiment.

Addressing Shankarlal, Bapu said:

You have hundred times more responsibility upon your shoulders than has Umiya. Umiya's courage has pleased me. Keep abreast of her desires and needs. In Hindu society, women have suffered in status. They are regarded as dependent. Give her freedom. You are a scout. It is the duty of a scout to give protection to others. She should not feel unhappy, but should feel that everybody holds her dear. I could not teach her enough Hindi. So put up with this. If all of us realize our duties, the difference between a Marwari and a Gujarati cannot last. Keep duty and tradition before your eyes. I advise both of you to lead a life of restraint and never forget the interests of the country.

Umiya, what should I say to you ? I have not time enough to talk to you separately. You have shown courage and shed lustre on the name of the Ashram, the province and the family. Do nothing wrong. I have put small garlands around your and Shankarlal's necks. In my estimation they are big. Do not fail to read the Gita every day. When disappointment stares into your face, select a hymn from the hymn book and recite it. When you have some leisure, spin on a *takli* (a twirl) and live peacefully. May God make you true servants and grant you a long life. Live in such a way so that I may not have cause for regret.

38

Around 1928, there were three teams working in Rajasthan. The Congress party was being led by Pt. Arjunlal Sethi, the Gandhian workers by Seth Jamnalal Bajaj and the third one was our group known as the Rajasthan Seva Sangh. There was no co-operation between the three; rather, there was disagreement. Shri Jamnalalji wanted me to work with him. But my views had not yet been completely transformed, although Gandhiji was slowly getting the better of me. In the meantime, Pathikji was released from Udaipur Jail, after serving a long term. He appeared to have been influenced by the Gandhian thought. Considering it an opportune time, I counselled him to meet Bapu and have a talk with him. Accordingly, he made for Sabarmati. So did Jamnalalji. But friction over leadership ruined the chances of amicable co-operation. Gandhiji wished Jamnalalji to be his chief representative in Rajasthan and the others to work under his guidance, whereas Pathikji wanted to have direct dealings with the Mahatma, and was not prepared to accept Jamnalalji as leader. Gandhiji did not consider it practicable to have a dual leadership in Rajasthan. He wanted as his representative only that person who thoroughly understood his beliefs and adopted them as a matter of faith. It was, therefore, but natural for him not to have complete confidence in any other, however senior or able. This decision hurt me at the time, but, later, I appreciated Bapu's wisdom.

39

A year hence my views underwent complete transformation. I had been convinced, some eight years earlier, of the futility and consequent failure of the cult of violence. The experience of these years, the results of friction and the policy of tit-for-tat followed in all nakedness and horror, compelled me to be forcefully drawn towards Gandhiji. In those days, I was editing *Young Rajasthan* from Beawar. Through Jamnalalji's good offices I left for Sabarmati in either August or September, I forget which, exactly.

On the way, I was mentally uneasy. Though I had met Bapu a number of times ere this, the projected meeting was going to be an important one, and I had to be prepared to adopt his philosophy and be guided by him. Would he accept me as one of his followers, and would I be able to accept his gospel and programme whole-heartedly? Would I be able to follow him without doubt or question? Would I dare to have a heart-to-heart talk with him, if the need arose, and lay bare my thoughts before him? The biggest of the many problems facing me was whether I would be prepared to sacrifice the newspaper work I loved and join the Ashram, if Bapu so suggested? Furthermore, if he advised me to give up States' people's work, or to change its pattern, would I be able to do so? Would I be able to keep in check my irritable temper? These, and other questions, were crowding my mind. But there was also a feeling of pleasure at the thought that I would have occasions for receiving advice, and opportunities to have talks and dealings direct with

India's man of destiny, its liberator and mankind's benefactor, besides having a chance to live with him as an inmate of the Ashram. Thus I was in a mixed state of doubt, elation and fervour.

After lunch and rest at a friend's house at Ahmedabad, I hired a tonga and reached Sabarmati at about 3 o'-clock. I had seen the Ashram before on the occasion of the Congress session in 1920. But that was only a visit; this a pilgrimage. Its fields, trees and huts seemed to beckon me. The delay and inner excitement began to tell upon me. At last, the tonga halted under a tamarind tree and I searched for the office. I had intimated Bapu in advance of my forthcoming visit, and he had informed the office. So, I was expected. While the luggage was left there, I was taken direct to *Hridayakunj* where I found myself standing before him.

On the western bank of the Sabarmati river was the room of the late Shri Maganlal Gandhi, which had many windows and doors, all of which were open. Bapu was sitting on a soft floor-spread against a cotton-stuffed back-rest. There was a desk in front of him. For sitting purposes Khadi strips were spread alongside the walls. The space in the centre was bare. This was significant of Gandhiji's sense of economy. Looking at me he smiled and said, "You have come. Was the train late? I had asked them to keep food for you." The smile beamed sincerity. It was winsome. The question denoted intimacy and Bapu's knowledge of train timings. I stated the reason for the delay. Bapu's next question was, "What arrangements have you made for the editing of the paper? Is there anybody to look after it now?" "Yes, sir," I replied. "You should continue writing for it from here. When I am away, I keep writing for *Young India*," reiterated Bapu

again. "Very well, sir," said I. The talk ended here. I was instructed that after I had fixed up a place for myself to stay in, I should go round the Ashram.

40

I remained in Gandhiji's immediate proximity for about a month. My routine was: to spin on the *takli* the whole day sitting near him, to watch his movements and to listen to his conversation, and, thus to have my doubts set at rest at leisure. The day after my arrival, he put me at ease, and bade me narrate briefly the story of my life and activities. I told him everything. He had cautioned me that if anybody desired to talk to him privately I should withdraw. This saved me from listening to other people's worries which would have preyed on my mind. This month's visit with Bapu moulded my thoughts and matured my mind — in favour of the Gandhian philosophy.

41

During the stay at the Ashram I developed ring-worm and when Mahatmaji heard about it, he put me under his treatment as he usually did in such cases. I was doubtful about the results, but joy and pride in having contact with such an important personage overcame the hesitation in submitting to such treatment. This first experience of Bapu's concern for the sick and the ailing was very soothing. The features of this treatment were that I had to undergo a fast for one day and had to take an enema and the powder of refined sulphur twice a day. The food at the Ashram was free of sugar and spices, and nothing was fried. I grew to like it. Later because of scientific reasons in support of these

restrictions, I adopted it as my normal diet with but slight modifications.

I also learnt during this short stay, for the first time, that Bapu's therapy consisted only of five remedies: enema, fasting, sponging, sulphur and quinine. With these five, he could cure a hundred ailments.

42

To lessen the ringworm, Bapu advised me, one day, to eat grapes. He instructed me to ask Ba (Shrimati Gandhi) for some. Hardly had I taken a few paces when Bapu called me back and said, "But be prepared for some commotion. Tell me your experience on return." I reached Ba's room, which was situated on the bank of the Sabarmati, and asked for the grapes. A frown gathered on Ba's face and calling Pyarelalji she said, "Look, who is this man. He wants Bapu's grapes for himself." If Bapu had not forewarned me, I could not have taken criticism lightly, as I am sensitive. Before Pyarelalji arrived, I replied, "Ba, I am a newcomer. I am unwell. I have come to ask for these reluctantly on Bapu's instructions." Ba's heart melted, her face cleared and she said, "Do not worry. I had plenty of them but Bapu has distributed most of them among the patients. But I have kept back a few for him. Your need must be greater than his. That is why he has sent you. Take them." When I came to know that I was going to partake of Bapu's share, I felt reluctant and hesitated. But Ba gave them to me with a reassuring air and began to ask me who I was, where I came from, how many persons were there in the family, and so on. I was comforted by her kindness. Bapu was probably waiting to know of my fate. When I told him what had transpired, he remarked, "Yes, that is Ba's nature. When

she finds something of my share being taken away, she gets irritated. But her heart is full of sympathy. As soon as she comes to know of someone being in difficulty, her heart melts like butter. Then she forgets even her concern for me." I entirely agreed with Bapu's analysis of Ba's devotion to him and her sympathetic heart. This experience was renewed and confirmed on several occasions during the years that followed.

43

Once Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Bapu were sitting together. Bapu's writing material was kept on the desk in front of him. Perhaps pencils used to be kept on the right-hand side. While talking to the Sardar, Bapu stretched his hand for a pencil which was not there but on the left-hand side. I noticed lines of disapproval appear on Bapu's face. He called for Pyarelalji and inquired where he had kept the pencils. Pyarelalji at once read from Bapu's face what he meant. He had no reply to make and Sardar Patel spoke up thus saving the situation. Smilingly he remarked, "He is a poet." Bapu smiled in return and the Sardar burst into laughter. I was surprised at Bapu's sense of meticulous arrangement and at the idea that both Bapu and Sardar regarded poets as easy-going people. After the Sardar left, I said to Bapu, "Bapu, it was not a big thing after all." Bapu became serious once again and said, "There must be orderliness in one's life. If the sun, moon and earth do not observe their laws, the entire universe would collapse. Every minute of mine is scheduled for certain duties. If I do not find my things in their proper place, much of my time would be wasted, much inconvenience would be caused and my work would suffer much. My near ones should bear these things in mind. And do you

know the definition of dirt in English? "No sir," I replied. "Anything out of place is dirt," said Bapu. And he continued as follows:

> If urine reaches the fields, it would make the soil yield gold. If it keeps puddled here and there, it produces disease. Waste paper is useful in making of paper or starting fire but it would be wasted if used for producing manure. If the railway pointsman were a trifle negligent, trains would collide and hundreds of lives would be lost.

This new thesis on neatness and orderliness appealed to me, and I mentally filed it away for future reference and use.

44

One day, a missionary lady from Bhopal called upon Bapu. Perhaps she was American by nationality. The old lady had been doing social work in India for several years. She started on the subject of eliminating poverty in the rural areas. She criticized the cult of spinning, and emphasized the importance of improving means of irrigation and thereby agriculture. I observed Bapu's reactions. At first, he listened with a smile on his face which became serious later. He said, "Sister, I have such a high regard for women that I never say to them a harsh word. I observe this rule with men also if they are foreigners. I must, however, state that despite your having spent so many years working among the village people in India, you have not understood the real rural problem. I am not partial to the spinning wheel. But in order to remove unemployment among the villagers under the present circumstances, there is no better solution. It is easily procurable; it is easy to work on account of the tradition behind it and is an ideal contrivance for working at home. I admit that the return

is small. But the average income of the villagers is so meagre that even a small addition to it affords them substantial relief. All can work it, young and old. Therefore, even small efforts put together afford much needed relief. Women can work upon the Charkha while at home. If someone were to suggest to me a better alternative I would collect all the Charkhas and set fire to them, as I do to foreign cloth and would not shed a single tear." At first, the old lady appeared uncomfortable and nonplussed, but when Gandhiji explained his view-point she was satisfied. As she rose with folded hands, Bapu also rose and saw her to the door. I was accustomed to seeing Bapu rise from his seat as a matter of courtesy, but I never saw him more courteous than he was to this lady. I guess that, after forcing a bitter draught down the throat of the old lady, his instinct of natural graciousness asserted itself to the full. For me, the sermon was sufficient to enable me to better understand the cult of Khadi. Before this, my love for Khadi was purely a sentimental one.

45

There was dispute at Ahmedabad those days between mill-owners and mill-workers. Bapu was appointed arbitrator on behalf of the mill-workers and Seth Mangaldas on behalf of the Mill-owners' Association. One day, Sethji came to consult Bapu on this subject. There was talk about raising the wage structure so as to ensure a minimum standard of living. Bapu proposed inclusion also of expenses connected with smoking as among a worker's necessitites of life. I was surprised, and Seth Mangaldas opposed this argument, "Why not then include drinking costs also among the necessities of

life?" Bapu at once replied, "There is much difference between smoking and drinking. Smoking has come to stay among the necessities of life for the peasant and the worker. I would like people to give up smoking. I am even propagating my views among the workers in my own way. But to bracket smoking with drinking would neither be right nor fair. Drinking has not become an article of daily need with any class or community in India nor do the workers themselves consider this vice as either indispensable or desirable. Nor have they included drinking in their charter of demands. But they have insisted on their demand of smoking expenses. That should be accepted. Even good things cannot be forced upon others." The elderly Seth was convinced. I learnt the lesson of winning over others through reason and persuation. But I could not grasp Bapu's thoughts on labour and capital. However, he voluntarily explained these to me after the Seth had left, as follows:

> I do not regard capital and labour as irreconcilable opposites, but rather as equal partners. Industry should belong to both. I do not regard mill-owners as masters and workers as servants. Labour is the real capital. The worker has, therefore, a higher status. The capitalists have intelligence and organizing talent, which are two essential requisites for the success of any industry. The capitalists can usefully exercise these qualities not as masters but as trustees. My ideas are opposed to Darwin's theory of struggle for existence. I believe co-operation to be both man's natural inclination and duty. There should be an element of partnership in labour and an element of duty in capital and the two should balance. I regard class differentiations as unnatural, unnecessary and harmful. In order to avoid this, I have introduced the system of settlement through negotiation (a Panchayati form of jurisprudence). I believe that this is the best method of settling disputes, not only in India but everywhere else.

Bapu uttered the concluding sentences with such confidence that the following verse of Kabir's recited that very morning at prayers, came to my mind:

सो चादर सुर नर मुनि ओढ़ी ।
ओढ़िके मैली कीनी चदरिया ॥
दास कबीर जतनसे ओढ़ी ।
ज्योंकी त्यों धरि दिनी चदरिया ॥

The mortal frame has been used by all;
Even by saints and seers.
They may have permitted it to be defiled.
But I used it with care
Lest I blot it with sin.

46

In order to remove any doubts, which I still might have had, one day I said to Bapu, "I have an ambition to do something big. Is that proper? If so, how can I set about it?" "The ambition to do good things is never bad," replied Bapu. "But what happens is," he continued, "when a man sets at achieving what he considers big, he neglects his basic smaller duties and begins to indulge in spurious actions and, later, even in questionable methods. Do you know music?" I was surprised at this abrupt question. I said, "I do not know music, but have an ear for it." "So you must have seen," Bapu resumed, "that astute singers select those high or low notes over which they have mastery, but achieve sweetness and true tonal control only by thoroughness. The same applies to the cult of *karma* (action). Whether it is a small deed or big depends upon one's capacity but one should plunge oneself whole-heartedly into it with mind, body and soul." I am not sure if the answer satisfied me completely, but the simile was as apt as it was unique!

47

During the course of a talk one day regarding the States, I told Bapu that the Maharaja of Bikaner had banned the entry of *Hind Swaraj* into his territory. Bapu was surprised at this. But when I asked him the reason for the Maharaja's so doing, he replied, "Yes, it contains sharp criticism of the *rajas* (rulers)!" Saying this, he asked for an English copy of the *Hind Swaraj*, and, turning over a few pages, remarked, "Here you are. With the publication of such remarks it was not to be wondered at if it is banned; rather the wonder is why it was not banned earlier!" Those remarks read as follows:

> You will admit that people under several Indian princes are being ground down. The latter mercilessly crush them. Their tyranny is greater than that of the English, and if you want such tyranny in India, then we shall never agree. My patriotism does not teach me that I am to allow people to be crushed under the heel of Indian princes if only the English retire. If I had the power, I should resist the tyranny of Indian princes just as much as that of the English.
>
> *Hind Swaraj*, p. 68, Edn., 1958

Bapu was surprised when I told him that the Maharaja did not read in Hindi. He had the Hindi versions of relevant news translated into English and then read them. But, when I told Bapu that the Maharaja always spoke in the Rajasthani language to his men, his shock over the ruler's disregard for the national language lessened somewhat.

48

Bapu's love for experimenting with dietetics was well known. He never allowed such an opportunity to escape him. When he heard about the experiments, along similar lines, being done by Shri Rajgopalan of Madras, he invited him to the Sabarmati Ashram so that they could continue to experiment with a raw food diet which had occupied the attention of Shri Rajgopalan for some years now. It was Bapu's habit to first experiment upon himself before recommending it to others. His followers, however, followed his example uninvited; I was among them. Such was our faith in our beloved leader, though, to the best of my recollection, the experiment was not much of a success. But I do remember an interesting joke in this connection. One day, Bapu had returned from his evening walk and was relaxing. Rajgopalán sat on one end of his cot and I on the other. While describing the merits of un-cooked food, Rajgopalan said that the taking of milk by human beings was analogous to animalism, and even went to the length of suggesting that the practice dulls one's intelligence. Pointing his finger to his forehead Bapu remarked, "Here you are. I have even started growing horns." Everybody burst into laughter. Poor Rajgopalan felt small. With his sparkling wit, Bapu thus discounted the exaggerated part of Rajgopalan's statement.

49

Probably by eating raw foods, Gandhiji developed dysentery about this time. Mirabehn tended him and I had the pleasure of making her acquaintance for the first time. In spite of being unwell, Bapu had to go to Allahabad. But, owing to breaches on the rail track

caused by floods, he had to return from the railway station. When Mirabehn heard of this, she came running and, placing her head at his feet, she exclaimed with joy, "Oh Bapu, you have come back!" Touched by her emotional outburst, he said, "Mira, you must have been either my mother or my daughter in my previous birth." I was wonder-struck at Mirabehn's concern and love for Bapu.

50

At that time, I received a letter from Delhi from my friend Diwansingh, editor of the *Riyasat*. He was a strong opponent of the Nawab of Bhopal. He wrote to me to inquire from Bapu how he could write in favour of such a man, and let him know. There was a comment to this effect in the Press also. When I drew Bapu's attention to this, he replied, "I shall explain: When I went to Bhopal in connection with Khadi work I was put up in a government building. A public meeting was held on the 10th September at which I praised the simplicity with which the building, where I was staying, was furnished. Referring to Khalifa Umar, I said that by following the ideals of Ramrajya the Indian princes could set up models of first class democratic governments. I neither praised the personal life of the Nawab Sahib as simple, nor did I say a good word about his administration. I know the conditions obtaining in Indian States, and the kind of life these princes lead. I hail from Kathiawad. I am not as blind as people think me to be. But I believe that the system of Indian States is not in conflict with true democracy, if the princes patterned their administrations according to my concept of Ramrajya. By this, I do not mean that the representatives should only be elected persons; I also mean that

they should be good people. In my opinion, such an administration would be better than a mere democratic set-up in the modern sense, because in a democratic system the emphasis is on men chosen by the people and not on their being men of character." I remember that Bapu clarified this point fully in the *Navajivan*. A summary of his note is given below:

I do not mean by Swaraj (self-government) a mere transference of power from British to Indian hands. According to me, the power would vest, with due restraint, in the hands of our three hundred million people. Under such a government, the decisions would not be based upon the will of the appointed officials but rather upon justice and truth. I have chosen to name it Ramrajya or heavenly rule. It permits a place for the *raja* (ruler). But *raja* means a protector, a patron, a good servant and the humblest of servants. He would be a *raja* who would eat the leavings from the plate of the people. In other words, such a ruler would go to bed when the people have gone to bed, would eat after they have eaten, and would live only if they live. May such *rajas* live long! If rulers of this type are impossible to produce in the present age, then I am sure that they will come to grief.

My praise for the Nawab Sahib of Bhopal should not be interpreted to mean that I have likened his palace to the hut of Hazrat Umar. All I meant was that where I had anticipated regal splendour I did not find even as much grandeur as one would find in a millionaire's mansion.

None need take me to be so simple as to be distributing certificates of merit to anybody willing to buy Khadi from me worth a few hundred rupees. Ordinarily, I can spot the clever ones who wear Khadi or buy it only in order to extract some advantage from me. There is an element of exaggeration in the complaints against *rajas* being guilty of murders by administering poison. Those who have convincing proofs to this effect are invited to send them to me. Here, I do not imply that no Indian prince per-

petrates such heinous crimes. I am not blind to the rotten state of affairs, obtaining in the States. But I believe, the administration in the States can be set right and brought under check. If they perish, the princes will do so by their own actions, provided we do not help them to survive knowing them to be what they are. Those who know them to be sinful and yet join their service, not only connive with them but also further entrench their power. Those who want to destroy them through questionable means also help them. 'Two wrongs will not make one right.' But they who, with pure intentions, like me, try to search for good in them and praise them where they so deserve, either reform them, or establish our right to non-co-operate with them or to offer non-violent civil disobedience, as the case may be. Of course, it is possible that we are occasionally misled.

I am of the opinion that such persons, as may be prepared to court imprisonment, not to speak of facing death, are few and far between in the States. If the States' people were to become fearless and were prepared to suffer imprisonment, oppression in the States would come to a halt. It should be remembered, whether in the States or in British India, that nobody can stop those who are bent upon undergoing suffering. When the spirit of selfless sacrifice pervades the length and breadth of this country, all evil will disappear.

I got a glimpse of Bapu's conception of and effort for Ramrajya for the first time and thus came to know that Bapu was as willing to answer questions publicly as privately. Indeed, he was democratic, both in thought and deed!

51

I witnessed the result of this outlook of his at Rajkot. A conference of the Kathiawad Youth was held under the presidentship of Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru. The Thakorsaheb of Rajkot graciously permitted the

conference to be held in his domain, and Jawaharlalji stayed with him as his guest. This was a matter of surprise as well as joy to me. In those days, political agitations and meetings in connection with the States used to be held outside the States in British territory. The rulers generally frowned at such activities, but Rajkot was different in this respect. It could be attributed, perhaps, to the fact that its workers took counsel from Bapu. Even Jawaharlal went there only after obtaining Bapu's consent. Lakhajiraj regarded Bapu as his father and teacher. It was the Mahatma's influence which worked behind the spirit of freedom and co-operation working in Saurashtra. The conference passed resolutions on constructive activities as well as political policies. I did not notice despondency among these people; instead, I found impassioned strength.

52

Pt. Banarasidas Chaturvedi, an inmate of the Sabarmati Ashram, served the cause of Indians abroad under the guidance of Bapu. He used to write articles and attend to correspondence. He neither spun nor attended the prayer meetings. Bapu acknowledged his independence, truthfulness and usefulness, and tolerated his nonconformity. I had been introduced to Pt. Banarasidas at Shantiniketan. On my meeting him at the Ashram he said, "I regarded Mahatmaji as the greatest and most powerful propagandist and myself as next to him. But now I yield this second place to you." This opinion of his helped to clear doubts. In the afternoon, I asked Bapu, "People regard you as a great propagandist. Why do you not then carry on propaganda, or cause it to be done, in foreign countries in favour of India?" He replied, "I am not a propagandist in the accepted

sense of the word. But I am, no doubt, so in my own way. The difference in my method and that of others, as in other things, is that I do not take recourse to untruth in order to belittle the other party; rather, even when I am criticizing him I give him credit for his good traits. From the point of view of truth and justice, it is no doubt necessary, but even from the practical point of view, it is right. It dulls the edge of opposition, and we rise in the estimation of a sober and impartial public. As to propaganda in foreign countries, I believe, in the first instance, that we do not get proportionate result as compared to the expenditure involved. Secondly, it is the events that create an effective publicity and not particular views. When we do solid work, we create eventful situations. It naturally kindles interest in foreign countries and the press and the people there begin to publicize them, irrespective of whether they are in agreement with us or not. You might have noticed that India never received so much publicity in foreign countries as during the non-co-operation movement days." I realized that that was fully the best method of publicity. Experience later confirmed this belief.

53

On return from Kathiawad I recounted my impressions to Bapu and inquired, "Why do you not start work in the rest of the Indian States in the same way in which you are working in the Kathiawad States?" "I can and I want to do," replied Bapu, "I have some definite ideas and technique for work in the States. But there is a hard condition in my way of work. And that is: there should be an organization to take charge of the work, and at least one able man to devote full time to the organization." Pausing for a moment, he looked

into my face and inquired, "If you can give your full time, I can create such an organization." I felt a plum drop into my basket, as though luck had really come my way. To be assigned my own pet task and that too to be prosecuted under the guidance of Bapu! What better could I desire? Quickly I made the reply, "I shall do it willingly." Bapu generally arrived at decisions after considerable thought, but once he had decided he was quick to take action. He picked up a paper and immediately drafted a Constitution in half an hour. It read as follows:

THE PRINCES' AND PEOPLE'S SERVICE SOCIETY

Object

The object of the Society shall be the service of the Princes and people of Indian States.

Means

(1) Where there is no prohibition from the State concerned, to undertake constructive work such as promoting Khadi, prohibition, social reform, removing untouchability and communalism etc.

(2) Where there is no prohibition from the State concerned, to make courteous submission to the princes regarding the people's grievances.

(3) To conduct in a friendly spirit newspapers or magazines for the promotion of the objects of the Society.

(4) To discover the best basis of relations between the Princes and their people, and the best system of government in accordance thereto and to cultivate public opinion on it.

NOTE : This Society does not share the opinion that the existence of the States is by their very nature contrary to the growth of the spirit of full democracy. The Society believes that their existence need not be inconsistent with the growth of such spirit.

Limitations

(1) To refrain from criticizing the acts and policy of one prince in the territory of another.

(2) To refrain from desiring or seeking the intervention of the British power in the affairs of the Indian States on any occasion whatsoever.

(3) No member of the Society shall ever depart from the path of truth and non-violence.

(4) In all matters of difference and doubts and in the determination of new policies, reference shall be made to (Mahatma) Gandhiji for his final decision.

54

I had a long discussion with Bapu by way of clarification of doubts. My first question related to the name and the objects of the Society. I could easily distinguish between the interests of the rulers and the ruled. Bapu explained: "From the synthetic point of view, we should not take them as basically opposed to each other. My theory of trusteeship as applied to the landlords and tenants should also be held to be applicable to the princes and the people. I want to make the princes the foremost servants of the people and I want to show that, if both the princes and the people accept my advice, their interests are identical and not conflicting. I can bring about this condition by inducing respect for the princes and gaining their confidence and by offering them greater goodwill. But, otherwise, I have always made allowance for offering Satyagraha in extreme cases. If in spite of this goodwill and warmth, these people do not change themselves, we shall be quite free to take most effective non-violent steps."

And I interrupted saying, "People who are usually oppressed and aggrieved, will not like to subserve the princes. Their co-operation will not be forthcoming from the very start." Bapu explained thus: "I find unjustified apprehension in your suggestion. It is my experience that if, after mature thinking, we place before the people what is not palatable to them in the beginning, they gradually digest and accept it. People follow their trusted leader. When they begin to draw comfort from our policy and begin advancing — and there is no doubt that both the objectives can be attained quickly and largely — they will realize the truth of it and their co-operation will be obtained in full measure."

55

Throwing light on the other aspects of his scheme, Bapu said, "To seek intervention of the British power in the affairs of the princes in the context of their present relations with it, will result in their further enslavement to the British and further estrangement from their subjects. In pursuance of their policy of imperialism, the British will not brook the subjects gaining strength. Hence displeasing the rulers they would not side with the people even though they were in the right.

"Similarly, lookings to the mutual relations between the States it becomes embarrassing to them if one State is criticized from the territory of the other, while from the point of view of the people, it does not benefit them. It would pay to beard the lion in his den. However limited be such criticism, it will benefit and strengthen the people, in some measure, but only if it is carried out in the concerned State itself.

"Even welfare activities can be better carried on with the co-operation of the princes. At any rate, so long as the people are not awakened and organized, this is the only course open to them to follow. Therefore, to make the princes care-free from the very beginning is at least far-sightedness.

"To have an adviser for the organization is important from my point of view. I would like you to make note of one or two points in this connection. The first one is that the prevailing system of elections does not work well in such organizations. It is better to constitute groups of people whose views, nature and ideals are identical. They should, no doubt, have full freedom of expression of thought but so far as work goes, there should be perfect discipline. There will still be scope for disagreement. The workers should appoint, with common consent, an adviser in whom they may have full confidence, so that the disagreement does not ripen into a dispute. They should then be guided by him.

"I would like that the office of the organization should remain at Sabarmati for the time being since the organization will be new and you are also new to me. It is essential that the work should be conducted under my direct supervision."

Bapu revealed to me in the end that he intended to make Shri Jamnalal Bajaj the President, Shri Manilal Kothari as the Vice-president and me the Secretary of the new organization. He wanted to combine into one my *Young Rajasthan* and Rajasthan Seva Sangh's organ *Tarun Rajasthan* which was being managed by Shri Manilal Kothari, and also intended to entrust the editorship to me. But, unfortunately, there was disagreement between Jamnalalji and Shri Kothari and the scheme lay in cold storage. This unfavourable turn

pained me but the clarification of my views with regard to work in the States was complete. I made good use of the constitution drafted by Bapu in the work of the Harijan Sevak Sangh. Our new organization, the Rajasthan Sevak Mandal adopted that constitution *in toto*.

56

The Young Rajasthan Press had printed an anonymous leaflet circulated by a political worker of Indore. It did not bear the name of the printer. Suspecting it to have been printed at my press, the Indore police tried to locate the place with the help of the local police, but in vain. The press was searched but nothing incriminating was found. Bapu's doctrines of truth and non-violence began to disturb me very much indeed! Revealing my state of mind to Bapu, I proposed that I should tell the truth to the authorities. He naturally approved of the idea. It was, therefore, decided that on reaching Beawar I should inform the Commissioner of Ajmer that the leaflet was printed by me and that if the Government wanted to proceed against me, I was willing to suffer the consequences. Bapu himself drafted the letter for me. I sent it on reaching Beawar. It read as follows:

Young Rajasthan Office,
Beawar, 8th September, 1929

To

The District Magistrate,
Ajmer-Merwara,
Ajmer

Dear Sir,

I write this to inform you that as a printer of the Young Rajasthan Press at Beawar, I printed in June

last a Hindi pamphlet entitled, *Indoreka Kalankit Kushasan* (Scandalous Maladministration in Indore) in 1000 copies at the instance of a gentleman who then chose to remain anonymous but who has since disclosed his name before the Indore Court which is Mr. Raghunathprasad Parsai. The pamphlet does not bear the name of the press and the printer. I was aware that by making this omission I was infringing the law. Since I have definitely changed my policy of work which will now be strictly in conformity with the principles of truth and non-violence, I take this, the earliest, opportunity of making a clean confession of my guilt. I shall be pleased and prepared to take the consequences of my act and to present myself before you if called upon to do so.

Yours truly,
Ramnarayan Chaudhry

As far as I can recollect, this offence merited long-term imprisonment and a heavy fine. Whatever may be said about Mr. Gibson, he completely overlooked this opportunity for punishing a rabid opponent like me of British rule. The police insisted and repeatedly sought permission to proceed against me, but on each occasion Mr. Gibson replied that since I had confessed my guilt he did not feel inclined to prosecute me. He was so impressed with me that when a prominent Congress leader of Ajmer, Shri Gaurishankar Bhargava, met him in his capacity as Resident of the Orissa States during the campaign days of the elections to the Central Legislative Assembly in 1934, he expressed surprise at 'an able man' like myself not having been set up as a candidate. This episode not only secured for me the title of brave from Bapu, but I also enjoyed the feeling of satisfaction resulting from an act of truthfulness.

Earlier, Mr. Gibson had served upon me a notice based on a wrong report of the police. But on discovering the truth, he did not hesitate to extend to me an apology in the open court. That such a fine Englishman should later have indulged in intrigues at Rajkot in Kathiawad against a man like Bapu surprised me beyond measure! It appears that this change in attitude occurred after an incident that took place in 1933-34. It was the firing of a shot, unsuccessfully though, at him, by a revolutionary of Ajmer, named Bapat.

57

As the programme of the Servants of the Princes' and People's Society was not put through, Bapu advised: "Do not waste your energy in merely editing the paper. A paper can be a means to an end but it is not to be an end or a programme by itself. Wind up *Young Rajasthan* and come back to me." I complied immediately and showed him for his approval the article informing the readers of the decision. But he did not approve of it. He was on his way to Bombay. It was day time. He took me with him upto Baroda. He himself wrote a substitute announcement and handed it over to me. It read as follows:

Farewell

With this issue the *Young Rajasthan* ceases publication. While making this announcement, I cannot feel entirely happy and I believe my sorrow will be shared by many readers. But it is a decision born of considerable thought and valuable advice.

I must admit that the paper has not become self-supporting. My views about work in Indian States have undergone a substantial change. Perhaps a paper for doing work in accordance with the revised ideas is not absolutely necessary. I feel that much

more substantial work is possible by greater restraint and even silence. What is needed is constructive work. This requires constant labour rather than newspaper propaganda. Moreover, I have realized that there are too many papers in the limited area, and for the one subject of Indian States. I, therefore, feel that I shall better advance the goal by disappearing from journalism at least for one year. (Mahatma) Gandhiji's method has for some time attracted me. In order to study it more fully, and at close quarters, I have decided, with his permission to pass one year at least in the Sabarmati Ashram doing such work as he may entrust me with. I assure the readers, and my many friends, that I hope by this renunciation to become a better instrument of service.

My deep thanks are due to the patient readers. Those who have paid subscriptions in advance are entitled to a proportionate refund, if they desire.

26-12-1929 Ramnarayan Chaudhry

As advised by Bapu, all the subscribers were informed that, should they so desire, their proportionate subscription would be refunded; and it was refunded to those who asked for it.

58

I cannot forget Bapu's views on journalism expressed on this occasion. He said, " The commercial tendencies that work behind modern journalism do not bring esteem to the noble profession. False and baseless news are engineered and published in order to defeat the opponent. Sensational news, which do no good to the public, are broadcast in order to increase circulation of the paper. Politics has been given the first place. Very little attention is given to social reform, to social service and to activities which go to uplift man and make him happy. As to advertisements, the bulk of

them consists of those concerning cinemas, luxury goods and exciting drugs. If I could do so, I would stop all newspapers except *Young India*, *Navajivan* and, (after a pause) a few others. Newspapers should contain nothing except healthy literature. They should be so priced as to make them self-supporting. If the people like the paper and need it, they will willingly pay for it and buy it. The unwanted papers have no right to survive by taking recourse to artificial and questionable methods. Even national workers are so attracted by them that they run papers even at the expense of self-respect and the risk of forfeiture of property."

Bapu conducted his papers according to the above ideals and whenever he found them in tight corners, he, for a while suspended their publication, reviving them when things improved. He neither compromised his principles nor stopped free expression of thought. I remember when, in 1946, I wanted to bring out *Naya Rajasthan*, a Hindi daily supporting his own policy, he did not bless me in spite of my pleadings.

59

The Lahore Congress session was held on the last dates of the year 1929. I was there. The chill of the North augmented by rain, fell heavily on the visitors. One day I visited Bapu's camp and was at once called in. He was alone. On my casual inquiry as to where . . . was, he replied, "Poor man; he is very uneasy. I tried to console him but he is sobbing. His mistake would have taken a serious turn but he realized and corrected it before it was too late. He says, 'I would undergo heavy penance.' I am trying to persuade him to take whatever step he may, on return from here." Bapu then narrated to

me the story, but I could not understand why he was doing so. I later found that Bapu's soft heart melts at anyone's repentance, and that he wants one to benefit from the example of the other.

60

I found at Lahore how admirably Bapu re-acted to public opinion. He was strongly in favour of India becoming a member of the British Commonwealth as a Dominion. But, finding an overwhelming majority throwing itself in favour of complete independence, he readily accepted it as the goal.

61

In view of the hardships that the guests had to suffer and in view of the physical, financial and hospitality burdens that the people of this poor country had to bear by holding the sessions in cold weather, it was decided on Bapu's suggestion, that the Congress sessions should thereafter be held in the months of February or March instead of in December or January.

62

Young Rajasthan having been wound up, it was decided at the end of the Lahore session that Shri Shobhalal Gupta and I should go to the Sabarmati Ashram, which we reached on the 10th January 1930. There were about two hundred inmates at the Ashram. Some of them were temporary residents who had come either to consult Bapu about the coming Satyagraha or to gain some knowledge of Ashram life, and the rest were permanent residents. Discipline was so strict that whoever committed breaches thrice in a month, had to quit the Ashram. The presence of freedom, restraint.

cleanliness, diligence, orderliness, discipline, and co-operation in the Ashram were valuable object-lessons to me. As an item of physical labour, I liked to do sweeping. I got the same assignment, and, that too, to sweep the path on which Gandhiji used to go out for a walk. Besides this, I was required to learn spinning and weaving, to teach Hindi to women and children and to look after some work in Bapu's office. My stay there lasted five months.

63

Mahatmaji had divided the twenty-four hours of the day and night into three parts. He believed that eight hours should be reserved for rest which included sleep; the other eight hours for the benefit of the person himself — moral as well as physical — such as personal hygiene, exercise, taking of meals, *puja* etc., and the remaining for social service. The Ashram time-table was drawn up according to this belief of his. Half of the social service had to be rendered in terms of physical labour. The morning and evening prayer, weaving and spinning, washing one's utensils and clothes, and sweeping one's place of living were among the compulsory duties. No servents were engaged for these jobs. Cleaning included the disposal of nightsoil. Prayers were collective but consistent with respect for all religions. The food was cooked in the common kitchen and was free from spices, sugar and fried stuff. To lead a life of celibacy, truth and non-violence, not to observe untouchability, to wear Khadi, not to wear jewellery and to write a daily diary comprised other compulsory items of the code of living at the Ashram.

64

I also wrote the daily diary for five months. A few of the extracts which have a bearing on Bapu's personality, thinking, influence and work are given below:

11-1-'30: Took bath in cold water during winter season for the first time this morning after many years. I am rid of the complex that a tonic and refreshing agent like cold water would cause me to catch cold. At quarter to eight I went to the Convocation ceremoney of the Gujarat Vidyapith. I followed Bapu on his way. He was discussing re-organization of certain aspects of Ashram life with Chhaganlal Joshi. I noticed Gandhiji's friendly and cheerful behaviour towards a child who crossed his path. This made me conclude that seriousness should be offset with sprightliness and humour.

65

12-1-'30: Continued spinning at the *takli* after our meal till 1 p.m., sitting beside Bapu and listening to an English woman's talk with him regarding the opening of a common hostel for men and women, both Eastern and Western, for purposes of studying international subjects. (The lady had a book shop at Geneva.) Bapu frankly, but politely, disapproved of the idea as, in his opinion, our youngmen get 'unhinged' when they go to Europe without previously knowing their own civilization.

66

13-1-'30: A few minutes after my reaching the Gujarat Vidyapith Bapu arrived there. Acharya Narendradev of the Kashi Vidyapith asked him about the role that national educational institutions should play in

the Congress programme. Gandhiji gave a spirited reply in his speech. If making an emotional appeal for preparing the youth for non-violent struggle were to be construed as exciting them, then Bapu did so vehemently. In brief, he exhorted the young men to be prepared to die for the cause of the country, but not to think of killing anybody.

67

At prayer time Bapu discoursed on the subject of small-pox. This malady is intended by Nature to expel heat from the body. The patient should not be given anything except butter-milk and fruit juice. Clothes should be changed daily, and the used ones boiled. Red clothes may be worn. Nobody should go near the patient except the attendant. Children should be kept away from the sick-room; the patient should be exposed to the sun's rays, filtering through a piece of red glass; or, the patient should be wrapped up in a wet sheet of cloth out of which the surplus water had been wrung out, and a woollen blanket placed over the sheet.

68

14-1-'30: Sat in Bapuji's room between 3 and 4 p.m. and spun. I was pleased to hear his flattering comment on the typing of Shri Shobhalal and thus I too received an incentive for doing work neatly. [The reference was to the typing of the famous 11-point letter which Bapu addressed to the then Viceroy, Lord Irwin, and which was sent personally through Mr. Reynolds who later came to be known as Angad. In spite of his one arm being useless, Shri Shobhalal had typed it out so neatly that there were no errors in it — not even of

punctuation. Bapu praised him for this, and he deserved it too!]

69

16-1-'30: Taught Hindi to Kusumbehn Trivedi who came through Bapu. Besides being inquisitive and knowledge-hungry, she appears to be intelligent and prompt.

Washed Anjana's clothes at 6 o'clock. The idea occurred to me that if somebody saw me washing my wife's clothes what would he think of me? Duty retorted that there is no room for discrimination when serving one's fellow-beings. And fairness demanded, "Why let slip a trifling opportunity of serving one who has given herself up completely to you?"

Reached the spot for cleaning at 6-20 a.m. To perform physical labour at dawn and in the chill of the morning hours and to find oneself simultaneously in the company of a vivacious person like Krishna Nayar was indeed extraordinary; the two made a phenomenon.

Stayed in the prayer meeting between 7-15 and 8-15. The Mahatma should not have said good words about my diary. It contains many private things and many would like to peep into it. To bring it to the attention of so many could well be harmful to a newcomer like myself and an insignificant individual at that. It so happened that after making the keeping of a diary compulsory, Bapu thought it prudent to go through all of them. After going through them, he picked up mine as a model and advised others to have a look into it. Then many inmates began to pour in to read it. That was why I felt abashed and somewhat dubious about the wisdom of the step.

70

17-1-'30: Gandhiji addressed a Hostellers' Conference at the Gujarat Vidyapith. The conference was significant of a special trend in Gujarat. Besides students from hostels of national institutions, those from others also joined in fairly large numbers. This was proof of national consciousness in the province. Bapu dwelt on the duties of the hostels, hostellers, and wardens. Briefly, he referred to the habits of refractoriness and luxurious way of living spreading among the students and advised that through wise counselling and guidance as well as discipline the hostels should be converted into centres of service and character building. The relations between the management and the students should be those of father and children.

Bapu cracked two jokes also. On the question of punishment he said that the students should beat the wardens with big sticks. The second one was when he said that only such students should keep long hair as want to attract girls.

71

Today at prayers, Bapu explained to the newcomers the significance of prayer. The substance was that one should ordinarily pray at any time and not necessarily at certain fixed times only. He also said that one should, as a matter of course, tell his prayers as the last thing at night and the first thing in the morning. This makes life regulated and peaceful. Following his suggestion, I have found that he is right.

* * *

Had to go to Bapu at 8-30 on account of the intense restlessness of Anjana caused by fasting. He said, " The first three days of a fast are difficult; this need not cause alarm. Five grains of soda bicarb dissolved in an ounce of water and given will cause her relief. Perspiration is a good sign. It is useful to bask in the sun." He insisted on coming to see her himself.

72

18-1-'30: When I went to Gandhiji in connection with Anjana's health, I found that he was dictating to Shobhalal a reply in Hindi to a letter that was in English. He stopped for listening to the condition of the patient. From today onwards I also have decided to correspond with Hindi-knowing Indians in Hindi only, and to give more attention to the sick.

73

At 5 o'clock the Doctor (the poet laureate Rabindranath Tagore) came to the prayer meeting. Bapu and he made a fine pair. These two apostles have raised the head of India high even under conditions of subjugation. The poet laureate spoke for two minutes or, perhaps, three! But what he said was pithy and to the point. He said that we should talk less and concentrate on disciplined effort and sacrifice for truth and righteousness. Such solid work alone can lead us to independence.

* * *

Returned home at 8-15. I reflected and questioned myself: If a busy man like Gandhiji can find time to carry out new jobs and other comparatively unimportant items so meticulously, then is there any excuse for our negligence and laziness?

74

19-1-'30: Cleaned latrines in the company of Jethabhai. It was my first experience of this form of social service. People are scared of it needlessly. The work is interesting enough. Of course, it occurred to me that if those who use the latrines exercise a little more care, then greater cleanliness could be achieved with less effort.

* * *

Before prayers the revered Ba came to inquire after Anjana's condition. Her simplicity and unassuming sincerity made me feel humble and filled with reverence for her noble and gentle qualities.

75

20-1-'30: Bapu came to see Anjana at 12-30. Should he be so much concerned about the weak and the sick in spite of this being his day of silence and fasting? Without doubt he has mellowed his life with fellow-feeling and hardened it with duty.

76

21-1-'30: Yes, today Bapu came at 12-30 and advised me to stop giving even lemon and honey to Anjana. I agree that only without these would it have been a true fast. He told us how to examine the tongue also. Pink colour represents health, whitishness indicates slight disorder while dark and yellow ones show serious disorder.

77

22-1-'30: Hardly had I stretched out myself to relax a while on return from the prayer meeting at 5-15 when Shri Kashinath came. Bapu desires and stresses that I should lend a helping hand in improving the language of the Hindi *Navajivan*. Today, I translated the editorial of the *Young India* into Hindi. In my opinion, Hindi can be made delightful and popular if a little admixture of Urdu be permitted. . . . To achieve such a mastery over a foreign language is in itself a big thing. But Bapu's articles, characteristically, were both vivacious and original, and hence made delightful reading. The melody, brevity and appropriate use of words are secondary attributes. To praise the terrorists and win them over impressed me much.

78

Cleaned latrines at 9-30 in the company of Narayandas Gandhi and Totaramji. The former was one day praised by Bapuji. He had referred to his selflessness, industriousness and regularity of life. His gentlemanliness, absence of conceit and calm and composed temperament impressed me on the very first day. Pandit Totaram is a different type of person. He has been seasoned in Africa and still possesses, and is still rich in, hard-earned health.

79

Talked to Ba up to 7-15. Her affectionate presence reminded me of my mother. I felt a gnaw, too. Stayed at the prayer meeting up to 8-15. There was apprehension in the air. Rumours are thick about Bapu's arrest. So he said, "If arrest is effected, it would be for

the good. There should neither be anxiety nor talk in that connection." But both took place. A vision of future separation appeared before my mind. I felt a lump in my throat. After that, Bapu announced that Chhaganlalbhai and Ramniklalji were to stay away from the Ashram. The former finds himself unable to subject himself to the rules and discipline of the Ashram, and the latter is in disagreement with them. In giving this advice, Bapu gave an excellent proof of his detachment. The third point was about Jan. 26. We were directed to stay on a fruit diet, at one time, to purify ourselves in thought, and to spin rigorously. In one of the diaries, Bapu's views were endorsed in a reference to Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak. Bapu always emphasized admitting one's mistake, and not yielding when one is not at fault.

80

23-1-'30: (Morning) Waited for the Mahatma in the company of Kashinathji up to 5-15. In the meanwhile, heard the soulful tune of Maulvi Surendraji (for he wears the dress of a Muslim divine) from under his 'Tree of Plenty' on the banks of the Sabarmati. He is a witty, philosophical and care-free type of a fellow. When Bapu emerged from his reading-room—for he uses his latrine as such—at 5-30, then Hindi *Navajivan* was discussed. He agrees that, apart from considerations of attractiveness, there should be an admixture of Urdu words in the language of the Hindi *Navajivan* from the point of view of popularizing it amongst Mohammedans and other Urdu-knowing people.

Went for my meal at 5-15. I had heard that Lakshmibai (wife of Pt. Khare) was short-tempered but she received me with cordiality. The fact is that, in order

to satisfy their little wants, people disregarded several big and small considerations of management and discipline. It is because of this that some women inmates were dissatisfied with an able, dutiful and expert leader like Gangabehn. Anjana found great sweetness in her. Then arrived Mirabehn and Ba. Mira fully deserves the name that she has been given. How good-natured, devoted, sunny-faced and sacrificing she is !

81

Stayed at the prayer meeting till 8-15. It was announced that Narayandas Gandhi would henceforth be the Secretary. Bapu revealed that this gentleman had been made the Secretary in spite of his possessing property and having separate messing arrangements because of his many other qualities. Even these two shortcomings are not of his own choice. He considers himself as trustee of the property, and is forced to maintain a separate mess because of his aged father. His father has dedicated his four sons to the Ashram. We must reciprocate such a praiseworthy act. To be liberal and self-denying was a special feature of Bapu's code of conduct.

82

24-1-'30: Swept the road up to 7-15. Mathuradasbhai was our leader today. He is a unique person. He is possessed of soldierly qualities, untiring energy and a sense of strict discipline.

Listened to Bapu's sermon up to 3 p. m. Speaking on the preparations for Independence Day, he revealed that the late Maganlal Gandhi took only such things as were

grown or produced in the Ashram. We must observe this condition at least on the day of fast. With regard to the flag he said, "I have permitted hoisting of the flag outside the Ashram as it creates an atmosphere. But, in the Ashram, it already exists. To plant a flag here would mean that even if the Government were to bury us and the Ashram under the ground, we would not let them seize the flag. Preparedness, in this respect, does not exist so far, to this degree." He agreed with the idea of going to the neighbouring villages for social service provided some persons might adopt it as a matter of course and some others might help them from time to time. Answering my questions on prison life, Bapu replied that, principally, we should lead a thoughtful life but Satyagraha could be offered as a protest against abusive language, beating, inhuman treatment, uneatable food, excessive work or against orders calculated merely to make a show of the Government's might and compel acceptance of its authority. He did not approve of President Patel not resigning the Presidentship of the Central Legislature but he conceded that this decision was not influenced by considerations of money or greed of office.

83

25-1-'30: Stayed at the prayer meeting up to 8-30. Bapu discoursed on death, the subject arising out of the death of Gita, the daughter of Bhagwanbhai, early this morning. The substance was that life and death are mere aspects of the same thing. The one should give neither joy nor the other grief. In either case, the performance of one's duties should continue as usual.

26-1-'30: The morning roll-call at the prayers is taken by Raojibhai Patel. He is cold and apathetic externally but warm and affectionate inside.

* * *

At 9-15, I joined the flag-hoisting ceremony and singing of the National Anthem. Bapu explained the significance of calling the Ashramites by numbers instead of by names. As inmates of the extensive prison that India is, and as soldiers of the freedom fight, it is more edifying and appropriate to be called by numbers than by names.

* * *

Attended the Independence Day pledge function up to 5-30. Bapu read out the pledge first in Hindi, then in Gujarati. Prior to this, he addressed a few words to the women labourers. Praising their plain living and disapproving our sophistry, he exhorted them to take part in such functions. Taking consensus on the pledge he said, "None need raise his hand without previously grasping its significance. Children are not entitled to vote. It is not fun. It amounts to taking a vow to lay down one's life for the attainment of freedom."

* * *

Talked to Shobhalalji up to 7 o'clock. Upon the latter's reaching late, Bapu gave valuable advice. A soldier ought to be at his post in time. He narrated to me that Bapu expressed joy on seeing the Japanese High Commissioner's carefully patched shoes and contrasted his salary of less than one hundred rupees per month with the Indian collector's salary of 2,500/- rupees. But he expressed disapproval of Japanese aggressiveness towards the Koreans.

* * *

Chhaganlalbhai Joshi's wife, Ramabehn, came to see Anjana from 8 to 8-30. This lady is very energetic and wears a smiling face. The husband, on the other hand, is serious and composed.

85

27-1-'30: Returned from the prayer meeting at 8-30. Today's hymn was deeply touching. अजहुं न निकसे प्राण कठोर, meaning that in spite of my best efforts to identify myself with Him, the embers of life continue to smoulder and impede my dissolution into Him. The verse reflects the mental agony of the devotee's soul at his failure to meet the Lord. Its tearing emotional impact is still seething in my mind. But no sooner did Bapu begin commenting on the diaries, this animation transformed itself into sombreness. ... is my near one. But here he did not act with responsibility. He did not follow the rules himself but criticized others and conveyed the criticism to Bapu through the diary.

He had been indulging in talkativeness, mere intellectualism and carelessness. These have been as much a cause of criticism outside as they have been of unhappiness at home.

86

28-1-'30: Gandhiji advised that in case of insomnia resulting from fasting, the patient should be made to lie in the open. In case of nausea, soda bicarb dissolved in water would prove a good remedy.

* * *

The prayer meeting lasted up to 8-15. Today, Bapu answered the criticism that intellectual development is retarded in the Ashram. He mentioned Tulsibhai

Nepali as an example in his support. He said that mere book knowledge stuffs the brain with extraneous matter but does not necessarily stimulate creativeness. In the atmosphere of the Ashram life, little jobs and big ones are all endorsed by thought which gives good mental exercise. The inmates should overcome their bashfulness and should not hesitate to introduce themselves to one another or help newcomers to get used to the ways of their Ashram.

* * *

29-1-'30: There was some mention of the mischiefs of Dhiru Joshi and others. Bapu admonished them in gentle language. This captured the minds and the hearts of the younger ones who were present.

87

30-1-'30: Had a talk with Gangabehn Jhaveri who is a cultured widow from a well-to-do family. She appears to be hard-working and bold.

* * *

Stayed at the prayer meeting up to 8-15. Today, Bapu instructed us to write self-introduction in the diary. He advised us not to throw rubbish here and there which not only made for a slovenly appearance but also showed our lack of civic sense and pride. According to him, anything out of place is dirt. Today's hymn touched on the values of Ramanama (repetition of the name of God) and was good. Balkobaji is one of the saints, seers and philosophers of this place.

88

31-1-'30: Dug conservancy pits up to 8 o'clock. It is a laborious job but not too tough. Educated people abstain from physical labour because of false notions of self-importance, thus leading lethargic lives

which cause them to fall prey to physical ailments of all sorts.

89

Spent the time from 12-30 to 4 in the company of Bapuji. Commander Kenworthy, a British Labour Party leader and a member of Parliament, had a talk with the Mahatma which lasted till 3-45 and touched on many subjects concerning India. He appeared to be quite shrewd. It is on such occasions that one came to know of Bapu's real views on all matters pertaining to mankind. The commander criticized the idea of nationalism. Nationalism in Europe, based on violence, has done much disservice. But India wants to attain independence without firing a single shot. Gandhiji is trying to rid nationalism of this sin, and present a unique method, in its place, of settling national disputes. Referring to the habit of wearing jewellery and keeping money buried underground, Bapu said, " What to say of gold and silver? Millions of Indians do not even own iron nails. If a handful of persons possess wealth, and we do not know how best to use it for the good of their fellow country-men, we can set them on the right path through education or legislation."

On the Hindu-Muslim question Bapu said, "I have no fear either of internal strife or of an attack from outside. Even if both of them occur they will be less disastrous than slavery. There are no religious prejudices among the common people. Their interests are cast together. Animosity is seen mostly among the educated. So, I am willing to hand over all the jobs to Muslims if need be. Nor shall we process the law in such a way that Musalmans may be in a position to oppose it as a class. We shall not seek military help to quell our strife even if a civil war overtakes us."

Speaking on the National Language, Gandhiji said, "For the common man, the local provincial languages will do, but, for the educated, Hindi must be the National Language." About compulsory primary education, he was of the opinion that since the English system of education was both harmful and expensive, it should not be extended on a universal scale throughout India. We ought to educate our people only on Indian lines.

The Commander suggested poultry-farming and fruit-growing as subsidiary occupations to eradicate the poverty of the peasants. Bapuji replied, "The first is impracticable because of lack of training, and so also the second in the absence of proprietary rights to the land. There is nothing so useful to the cultivators as the spinning wheel or charkha."

Regarding our National Debt Gandhiji said, "I have not advised that we repudiate all the loans to us. I want an investigation to be made. In my opinion, the total amount of the loan has not been raised in the interest of India. With this huse debt on our heads we shall not be able to set apart money for the welfare of our people even if we have achieved freedom." Regarding the question of the Round Table Conference, Gandhiji said, " Many Englishmen believe that British rule has benefited India. I believe, and I believe it on the testimony of many impartial Englishmen themselves, that this rule has ruined us. As long as Englishmen hold the former view, no good can emerge from the Round Table Conference. If my eleven demands are accepted, it will give proof positive of the sincerity of the British. These demands are non-controversial. All our countrymen will make the demands unanimously."

The Commander, however, had one constructive proposal to offer, i.e. Indianization of the Army within

fifteen years. He was appreciative of the difficulties ahead of the British Government but he was not willing to give priority to the Indian situation. He sensed communalism in the Haji Bill. Some Agriculture Department official of Bikaner State gave him the "news" that Indian farmers do not eat and do not cultivate potatoes on account of a religious prejudice!

Commander Kenworthy showed great interest in the Indian States since he had been a guest of various rulers such as those of the Patiala, Alwar, Bikaner and Jamnagar States. He praised the Princes for their industriousness, punctuality and administrative reforms. Bapuji said, "The condition of the people in the Indian States is worse, in many respects, than that of the people in British India. This is due to the fact that the British Government, being directly responsible for British India, fear criticism and hence try to show better conditions. In the States, they are 'invisible' rulers. They get done whatever they like, and the Princes have to suffer the odium. Princes can occupy a place in the India of tomorrow but they will have to yield certain rights to the people." During this long conversation, I found that I had spun for nearly two hours on the *takli*. Vallabhbhai was also present. He spilled humour, rage and sarcasm. When the Commander referred to the prevalence of corruption among Indians, the Sardar (Vallabhbhai) became excited and retorted, "The British civilians also make 'hay'. The Political Agents amass as much in one year as would last them the rest of their life."

* * *

Returned from the prayer congregation at 8-15. Bapu explained by quoting a case that 'straining' at

the time of evacuation sometimes causes a fissure in the region of the anus. It is a serious infirmity.

90

1-2-'30: Today, at the prayer meeting, Bapu disclosed that . . . and . . . have left the Ashram, the first for not being able to keep his mind free from ideas of sex, and the second, for reaching the prayer meeting late twice during the month. They did well in confessing their lapses. Everybody is liable to err. But, if an error is cherished and nurtured, it becomes a crime. Referring to the relation between fever and constipation Bapuji said, "Raw vegetables should be eaten liberally. Rice may be avoided, but if it must be eaten, it should be masticated thoroughly. Bread should be brittle or crusty from being properly baked. Pulses or cooked vegetables are not necessary. Milk or curd may be taken. It is good to take hot water early in the morning."

91

2-2-'30: Bapuji kept me busy till 4 o'clock. Had a talk with him in private. In connection with . . . and . . .'s estrangement, Bapu would first talk to them before making separate arrangement for their residence. Bapu has great faith in his ability to effect a compromise. . . . He does not consider insurance necessary. Referring to . . . when . . . told him that he does not enjoy impure thoughts though they still visit him, Bapu advised, "Talk to women with eyes cast down. If no contacts are kept for the time being, it will be better. Referring to . . . 's recent error and consequent fast and to . . .'s fall, Bapu said, "One has to be very careful during the period of *sadhana*."

92

3-2-'30: During prayers, Bapuji spoke about three things: he emphasized on improving the handwriting and using Hindi more correctly. He also invited opinion on translating the Sanskrit *shlokas* (verses) into Hindi, and adopting them for recital at prayer time.

* * *

4-2-'30: Today, Bapu spoke (at the prayer meeting) on cleanliness. In his opinion, every soldier of the freedom-battle should know how to mend his own clothes.

93

5-2-'30: During the interval (12-30 to 1) Gandhiji came and gave his whole time to affecting a reconciliation between... and.... It is a matter of shame that Bapu should be troubled and bothered about other people's domestic problems and worries which they ought to be able to settle themselves.

He insisted on improving the level of cleanliness of the latrines. and explained us how to put grass leaves in the receptacles. Further, he said, nobody should refrain from getting vaccinated because of his views. The Mahatma also said that in case the Government arrested him and confiscated the Ashram, then all the men and women should insist on staying in it by passive non-co-operation methods.

94

6-2-'30: Talked to Pandit Khare on starting Hindi classes up to 10-30. He has many good qualities, yet he is so simple. The way he tends his ailing daughter is worth emulating.

Kashinathji revealed today that our translation was not approved by Bapuji. When we heard that the one by an old and able colleague, Mahadevbhai was also not approved, we felt much better and not so depressed.

* * *

8-2-'30: Gandhiji read out at the prayer meeting rules concerning cleanliness of the latrines. Being late at prayers was counted absence. The theft of the chappals (sandals) was described as a justifiable reaction against our possessiveness. He advised us to keep our shoes in small bags.

* * *

9-2-'30: Made out a list of Bapu's books on the subjects of food and health. It appears that he has studied these quite exhaustively, and from them has evolved his own methods, which he first tries on himself and then on others!

* * *

10-2-'30: Today he advised the inmates to accord the President of the Indian National Congress, Jawaharlalji not merely a respectful welcome but a warm and cordial one on his arrival two days hence. The second point related to the objections of the students about writing daily diaries and presenting them to the teacher. Those who could not observe the rules, he said, were free to leave the Ashram. What blind devotion is there behind . . .'s objection that he does not want the teacher to sign the same diary which Bapu goes through and then signs!

95

11-2-'30: Stayed among the children till 4 o'clock. An ugly incident that occurred there is causing me agony. The children were making noise. I saw

Gangabehn pulling a child by the ear. She might have done so out of love. I screwed Manu's ear in anger. He yelled, thus bringing Rasik to his defence. How far was Rasik justified in this I cannot say. But the use of force on my part was certainly wrong. I have expressed my regrets to Gangabehn. What more amends could I make?

(About this Bapu wrote in my diary, "Nothing more is called for. Such punishment may not be administered in future". —Bapu.)

96

Today, Gandhiji said at the prayer meeting, " Whether there are three errors in a single assignment or they occur in different ones, they will all be counted. Alertness, in the field of action, selfless service and meaningful prayer are one and the same thing. God gives mental equilibrium through all the three.... Even inspite of the guests alone being called, why should the inmates have gone there at the time of the former's talk with Bapuji?

Commenting about this Bapu wrote in my diary, "It was not proper to follow the guests. Such inquisitiveness should be avoided.")

97

12-2-'30: Today, Vinoba Bhave differentiated between private prayer and mass prayer. In the first case, one gets support from God for oneself, while in the second, others also get it....Anjana, by nature, cannot keep idle even for a moment. The baby does not like being neglected. If left alone, it becomes cross and cries. I get perturbed. How to straighten out the situation?

(Upon this Bapu wrote in my diary, "The remedy lies in the proper education of children.")

98

...Listened to Acharya Vinoba's sermon along with Anjana up to 11 o'clock. He compared spinning on the wheel with that on the *takli*. He described the former as a means of sacrificial ritual and the latter as a means of interminable prayer. With regard to the outturn of work, he liked the former to the hare and the latter to the tortoise. He appeared to be a man of clear thinking....Reached the children's class late by 10 minutes. Compensated by giving fifteen minutes extra towards the end. But did it compensate?

(In reply, Bapu wrote in the diary, "Yes".)

99

(At the prayer meeting) in answer to my question, Bapu disapproved the idea that the diary which contained his signature, should not contain anybody else's.

[While recording Bapu's plans about the coming Salt Satyagraha in the diary, I addressed him a few questions. In reply he wrote, "About the struggle, put questions after the meeting of the Congress Working Committee (which was in session at the Ashram itself at that time) is over. —Bapu"]

100

14-2-'30: Met Premabehn at the river bank. She is a heroine type among the Ashram sisters.

Listened to Bapu's discussion with some of our national leaders up to 9 o'clock. He found nothing substantial and of mass concern in the suggestions like

getting the Viceregal Lodge vacated, planting of the National Flag on the Red Fort at Delhi, exploiting the forests for conversion into fuel, or ruining the toddy palms etc. He thought it more worth while to take over the salt mines.

101

15-2-'30: Accompanied Bapu on his rounds up to 7-15. He was talking to Dr. Hardikar about the changing of the colours in the National Flag. Personally, he is agreeable to substituting saffron for the red in order to meet the demand of the Sikhs. Another gentleman asked him several questions. Replies were quick and crisp. (At the prayer meeting) the Mahatma said, "Those who have volunteered their names for Satyagraha should be ready, on the one hand, to suffer imprisonment, flogging or capital punishment and, on the other, to carry out what is ordered to be done."

* * *

16-2-'30: Bapu told Mazumdar, "When we fight the battle here, world's attention will automatically be focussed upon us. If we carry out publicity in foreign countries even by spending money and energy it will be taken as one-sided."

102

18-2-'30: Listened to Gandhiji's clarification of doubts of the leaders up to 11 o'clock.

Non-violence appeared today in its defiant form. The substance of Bapu's view is, "Until I actually invade the salt mines, others should go on studying other possibilities. They should make preparation for Prohibition, boycott of foreign cloth, disobedience of

forest laws or withholding of land revenues, whichever is feasible. The money and workers of the Charkha Sangha should be ready for the sacrifice. The workers should fully explain the future developments to those who are deriving benefits from this organization. If they voluntarily offer co-operation it should be welcomed. Fake agitation should not be set up. Women should not come to the front lines in the beginning. When men's agitation has gained momentum, or when men have been exhausted, then only should women be invited. Salt retailers will be asked to distribute salt free, or it will even be manufactured." On the arrest of Bapu, everybody should plunge into the struggle everywhere. The Kisans should withhold payment of rents to the landlords. The States' people can also justifiably break the Salt Laws. An atmosphere of widespread defiance has to be created. If Bapu finds the non-violent soldiers impotent or if people kill Englishmen, he will start a fast unto death in the jail itself. On the second type of emergency arising, other leaders could also go on a fast. Bapu would leave instructions with regard to the programme to be followed. Men or women above sixteen years of age would be eligible for recruitment. If the Sambhar lake does not involve a conflict with the States, this should also be made a front.

103

...Listened to Bapu's talk with Shobhalalji up to 3-15. The subject was violence *versus* non-violence and the mode of work with regard to the Indian States. The Gita does not deal with material warfare but with the warfare of the soul with the senses. Swaraj won through violence cannot be beneficial to the poor. A noble objective should be attained through noble

means. You cannot harvest rose if you sow a thorn. One who intends killing the other cannot have love for him. The freedom that exists in other countries has been defiled with violence.

* * *

At prayers, Bapuji explained from the example of Prahlad and from his own example that only such people have a right to offer non-violent civil disobedience as have obeyed the law.

* * *

19-2-'30: Talked to him up to 3-45. This struggle will yield limitless good results for the States' people. Hence I decided to offer my name as a volunteer.

104

25-2-'30: A serious happening took place today. Vasant Khare is no more. How intelligent, how knowledge-hungry and how promising he was! Bapu dwelt at length on the inevitability of death, and on the futility of both joy and sorrow. But his grief was discernible when he uttered these words, "God's ways are inscrutable ! I am living at sixty while Vasant passed away at six!"

26-2-'30: At the prayer meeting, quoting the example of Jhamaklal, Bapu explained that those who have given their names are already facing jail or death. Those who have not yet volunteered themselves should also keep in readiness to welcome a call for suffering or reward. Those belonging to any other category, besides the above two, will do well to quit the Ashram for the sake of their own reputation as well as that of the Ashram.

* * *

28-2-'30: Today Meghji passed away. Bapu felt the loss. But how could he forsake his principles by insisting on vaccination? Today he explained in detail his views regarding the maxim that the whole creation is our family.

* * *

1-3-'30: Today, at prayers, Bapu threw light on the four types of Satyagrahi soldiers. They could be imprisoned, beaten, killed or deprived of their property. Therefore, they should be prepared to face these. Those who might not be despatched to the front should devotedly help the field fighters like Prabhusinh of Lady Smith. In the courts the Satyagrahis should not make any statements outside of confessing what they had done.

105

2-3-'30: At the prayer meeting today Bapu advised that those words be deleted from the text of the marital pledge of brides, which seek to give the bridegrooms the rank of teachers and gods.

* * *

6-3-'30: The list of 'combatants' was read out today. Though the absence of my name caused me disappointment, yet the orders of the 'commander' had to be carried out.

(In this connection Bapu wrote in my diary, "Since you have to go to Rajputana, your name was not mentioned. — Bapu")

* * *

7-3-'30: Bapu answered questions at the students' meeting between 3 and 4. Details were discussed in connection with the 'march' such as food, clothing,

service etc. Birlaji said that the Viceroy had mentioned to Dr. Moonje that Gandhiji's letter to him was discourteous. Perhaps because the Mahatma had not used the title in his letter.

* * *

While at evening prayers, Bapu received a telegram informing him that Vallabhbhai had been sentenced to undergo simple imprisoment for three months and three quarters for defying the ban imposed upon him not to address meetings at the village Ras in Borsad sub-division, and that he was being taken to the Sabarmati Jail. At the close of the prayer, Bapu advised all to keep calm and be dutiful, and advised pressmen to be careful and report nothing but the truth. Then we all went up to the road and had a look at Vallabhbhai.

Stayed with Bapu up to 9-30. He dictated the text of a handbill calling upon the mill-workers and the public to observe *hartal* and hold a meeting, and affixed his signature to it after getting the consent of the mill-owners. How solicitous the old man is for upholding Vallabhbhai's prestige — for helping a com-patriot !

106

8-3-'30: Today at the prayer meeting, Bapu said, " Dr. Haribhai and others have undertaken to serve the Ashram during my absence. Their services should be availed of only when it is indispensable. I shall go to England only when our sails are full of the force and vigour of Satyagraha and the British power can be compelled to negotiate a treaty with us. At the moment, neither Mr. Macdonald nor Mr. Benn would invite me,

nor would public opinion permit them to do so. Reginald Reynolds will also stay at our Ashram. He has come to help deliver India from British bondage. He is an educated young man and is possessed of high ideals.

* * *

10-3-'30: About two thousand persons must have joined in the prayers today. The congregation was, therefore, held on the sands of the river bank. Bapu said, " Do not come to the prayer meetings for mere excitement, but do attend them for the love of saying prayers. Put on Khadi and help in the Satyagraha movement."

107

11-3-'30: At the prayer meeting today, Gandhiji said, "Those who have volunteered to join the Satyagraha struggle will come back only after attaining victory. Until then, they would stay in jail or would die in action. But whatever happens, throughout the campaign they would have to adhere to all the vows of Ahimsa, truth, celibacy, non-stealing and non-possession till the goal was attained. Men and women staying behind in the Ashram would, of course, have to observe these conditions. Those who cannot pledge to keep them should withdraw from the struggle or leave the Ashram, as the case may be. Also those, whose wives do not readily permit them to join the struggle, should not join. Women should not pamper their children, nor should they permit them to consume sugar etc. Young girls would do better not to marry while the conflict lasts."

Today too, evening prayers were held on the bank of the river. The crowd swelled to nearly 5,000 people. Bapu delivered his last sermon today calling it his

'will'. He advised people to carry on the struggle, even if he were arrested, in a peaceful and disciplined manner.

108

12-3-'30: Today is the fateful and memorable day of the famous Dandi march. A separate morning prayer was held for the thousands of people who had collected overnight, alongside the road. Bapu appealed to those who were staying behind at the Ashram, "Live in such a way that you shed lustre on the name of our beloved Ashram." These words were meant to drive home to us that we should lead a life of purity, duty, humility and discipline.

* * *

22-3-'30: I was in the students' hostel with my son Pratap on my lap when Yashodabehn, at the suggestion of Premabehn, scared away the bees. They swarmed upon me and stung me and the child who cried piteously and became senseless. Anjana hurriedly applied kerosine oil to the child and this saved him. My regard for the sisters in the Ashram grew at the promptitude and concern with which they rushed to our help. We cannot forget the sacrifice of Motibehn, Lakshmibehn and Velabehn and the help of Tarabehn, Shanta and others.

109

During January, the weather was unusually cold and the waters of the Sabarmati had become very chill indeed! Some inmates relaxed in their duty of taking a daily bath. The manager of the Ashram informed Bapu of this. In persuance of his daily practice of communicating instructions of common importance at

the time of the evening prayer, Bapu said, "God has given us river water, so also hands and feet. Why then shrink from a daily bath?" Kattu, whose real name was Hari, was the son of an Ashram worker, Shri Giriraj, and had been nicknamed Kattu. He was considered the leader of the spirited boys. He shot out, in a sharp tone, "God has given cold also!" The entire assemblage burst out into laughter, Gandhiji joining them heartily. The issue was drowned in it, and nothing further was said about the matter then.

110

Sometime before the Dandi march, Bapu and Mahadevbhai were busily engaged in discussing the draft of the letter that was to be addressed to the Viceroy. I also was there and Mirabehn presently joined us. The words 'so charged' were used in a sentence probably to convey the sense that the atmosphere was charged with violence. Mahadevbhai characterized this use as a typing error and preferred the word 'surcharged'. Bapu thought of testing the knowledge of those present. He asked Mirabehn what should be the correct word. She endorsed Mahadevbhai. Then came my turn. "You have also edited an English weekly, Ramnarayan", said Bapu, "What do you think should be the right choice, 'so charged' or 'surcharged'?" I at once blurted out, "In my opinion it should be 'so charged'." Bapu said, "It is this word which I had used." Then he gave a short discourse not only on the use of this word but also on the English language and its expressions. I marvelled at his knowledge of this language and its correct usage.

111

The question now arose as to who should edit *Young India* after Bapu's arrest. There was every possibility of Mahadevbhai also being arrested in the near future. Bapu said, "Reynolds is there and after him Ramnarayan can take charge." Mahadevbhai agreed, saying: "Yes, Ramnarayan is a clever fellow." And Bapu added, "He is brave too." I blushed at this shower of praise. Summoning up courage, I said, "Bapu, you have perhaps assessed my worth from my editing *Young Rajasthan*, but I really don't deserve so much credit or praise for it. I consider myself not sufficiently competent enough to aspire to the editorship of *Young India*." The discussion ended there but Bapu's opinion about my so-called 'bravery' lingered to the very end. I attribute it to his constant search for virtue in others.

112

Once, some visitors came to see the Ashram at noon. They requested me for water as they were thirsty. I drew a bucketful from the well and gave it to them to drink. My co-workers drew my attention to the Ashram code which forbids us from offering food or drink to them. Personally, I saw only a chance of being of service. While accompanying the Mahatma on a walk, I enquired of him the reason for this particular taboo. "We must render bodily service to the best of our ability to the sick and the incapacitated." replied he. "But to render such service to the able-bodied and to offer them free drink and food will be tantamount to encouraging laziness and beggary, and diminishing respect for human dignity. We

should make men self-reliant. That is why I have provided a bucket and rope at the well. Whoever feels thirsty may himself draw water and quench his thirst. So also about food. It may be given in exchange for work rather than as a dole."

113

A worker, Vallabhbhai by name, had worked for sometime among the *kisans* of Bijolia. He knew the influence we wielded among them. In those days, he was working in a village of Gujarat. One day he met me by chance in the Sabarmati Ashram, and pleaded with me to accompany him to his centre. I explained to him my limitations and my inability to accede to his request. But as he insisted, it was agreed that the matter should be placed before Bapu, and, if he approved, I should go. When Vallabhbhai put the proposal to Gandhiji, he replied, "Is there no leader left in Gujarat?" I was confounded at the reply. I sensed provincialism in this. When I went to Bapu in the afternoon as usual, on my usual duty, I explained to him privately my reaction. He answered, "You have done well to ask this question. You must know my concept of *swadeshi*. It is our duty to back whatever is produced in our village, district, province or country, even if it is expensive. This gives work, livelihood, training, experience and impetus to the local artisans. Applied on a wide scale, it comes to this, that we should keep the all-India leaders for special occasions, and should manage with the local leaders for consultation on minor issues. This creates confidence and self-reliance. Besides, such leaders possess an intimate knowledge of local and provincial conditions, which outsiders do not possess, however competent and well known they might be. Therefore, the former can be expected to be

more adept in solving local problems. Outsiders sometimes complicate them, though unintentionally, because of ignorance. But, they should be welcomed whenever there is a dearth of local leaders or where a worker himself so desires." Thus, by this small query, I got an opportunity of understanding a major principle of Bapu's.

114

The Salt Satyagraha was about to be launched. Punctuality and other rules of the Sabarmati Ashram were strictly observed. As soon as the prayer bell rang, the gates were closed. Those who reached after the bell sounded were shut out and marked absent. One day, the bell rang just as Bapu was entering the gate, his one foot being inside the ground and the other outside. The gate-keeper allowed him in. At the close of prayers, Bapu said, "I have been a defaulter today. Though most of my body was inside yet, one foot remained outside, so the gate-keeper ought not to have shown me favour. I also should have stayed out. However, I was moved by the thought that so many of you would be waiting for me. But such consideration should not be shown to any one except a sick person or his attendant, nor should one accept such preferential treatment." Rigorous was Bapu's moral code and hard his way of living! From that day onwards, the prayer meeting was held in the open.

115

One day, at the close of prayers, Gandhiji praised somebody's diary calling it 'ideal' and also praised his handwriting. He said, "His writing is as good as mine is bad. Bad points should be rejected even if they come from a 'Mahatma' and good points should be picked

up wherever found. In the Indian pattern of education, great emphasis was laid on the quality of writing and many people wrote letters which were a delight to look upon! Nowadays the handwriting of most educated people is unprepossessing. Big, beautiful rounded lettering is significant of one's talent." Bapu was as keen on external neatness as on internal.

116

When I went to see Bapu one afternoon to carry out my routine duty, he pointed to my shirt. It was somewhat torn near the shoulder. I replied, "As Anjana is unwell, I could not get it mended." A few wrinkles appeared above his brows. But with a smile, he said, "A normally neat, clean and well-dressed man like you should not become careless. It is not compulsory to wear a shirt, but if you do so, the shirt should be clean and properly stitched. Unclean and torn clothing signifies laziness, ignorance and a lack of culture. A worker should know at least how to mend his own clothes, if not how to tailor them." He meticulously noted little things and tried to improve, in this manner, our ways of living.

117

In connection with the Ashram accounts, the manager was being blamed for not maintaining the books properly. The accusers included members of the Gandhi family and some other important men. After hearing both the sides, Gandhiji declared the manager innocent. Not long afterwards, an inmate of the Gandhi family working in Kathiawad was similarly accused. In this case also Bapu listened to both sides and decided in favour of the accused. He neither held the accused guilty in the first case because he was accused by his relatives nor

did he hold the accused guilty in the other case, simply because he was his relative. Both cases were decided in my presence. It was not Bapu's impartiality that surprised me, but his intimate knowledge of the intricacies of accounting. Over and above this I found how keenly he differentiated between an honest mistake or ignorance or carelessness and dishonesty and how he insisted on the keeping of clean and proper accounts. Inner circles know the story of a leading worker of Gujarat who had to leave Bapu because he could not maintain an accurate account of public money.

118

One night, a burglar found his way into the kitchen. In those days, inmates used to keep watch at night by taking turns at this duty. The burglar was caught and kept over-night in a cell and produced before Bapu in the morning. Bapu's first question was, "Has he been given any breakfast?" This thoughtfulness, even for wrong-doers, was nothing unusual. When the man had eaten, Gandhiji explained to him, kindly but firmly, how bad it is to steal the property of others. If he was driven to it by poverty, he would be given work at the Ashram. But the thief chose to go away. Bapu said in the evening prayer meeting, "Burglary takes place in society because most people do not have enough for food and clothing while a few roll in plenty even without working. We Ashramites have taken a pledge of voluntary poverty and renunciation, but yet we have a surplus. If the villagers in the neighbourhood become envious of us, what is there to wonder at? We should so conduct ourselves that we do not cause resentment in others." Bapu's diagnosis of a crime and his remedy for the same made a deep and everlasting impression upon my mind!

119

The day I reached Sabarmati, Bapu wanted to know my past. I wanted to tell him all about it in private as it would include not only my domestic affairs, but also reference to others. He did not like my asking for a private talk but he, nevertheless, agreed to it out of regard for my feelings. After it was over, he said, "Your request for privacy was justified. Ordinarily, I like all workers to live openly. My own life is such. But I have sometimes to keep certain matters secret in order to protect others. If you were also moved by the same considerations, you were right." Bapu always tried to understand another's point of view, and, where a principle did not come in the way, he tried to accommodate him.

120

Pratap was a child. One day, seeing Bapu's watch hanging from his waist, he became curious and, holding his mother by her *sari*, began to ask for it. While Bapu had a kindly disposition and was particularly fond of children, yet he believed that their unreasonable demands should not be acceded to; instead, they should be skilfully guided to better behaviour by correct education. So, he came to Pratap and applying the watch to his ear said, "See how well it ticks! But this is not your toy. It is mine. Therefore you will not get it." Thereafter, whenever Bapu and Pratap met, they addressed each other with "tick", "tick", and the matter ended there.

121

One evening, Bapu was returning from a walk accompanied by quite a number of people. A herd of bullocks came dashing into us from behind. Everybody dispersed helter-skelter but Bapu stood his ground.

122

The night before the Dandi march was scheduled to commence, the air was thick with rumours of Bapu's expected arrest. Even the police had appeared on the scene. There was a stir in the Ashram. But when Bapu was awakened and informed of this, he listened and then fell asleep again as if nothing had happened that merited notice.

123

On my joining the Ashram, Gandhiji asked me to keep a daily diary. He also asked me to write down a brief history of myself giving names of all the members of the family. I could not make out why I was asked to do this. But, later, I discovered that he kept direct contact with the relatives of the workers, he remembered their names and corresponded with them. He thus treated hundreds of workers as members of his family and dealt with them as such.

124

In spite of being so fearless and so pure, Bapu never made a secret of his shortcomings. He feared very few things including death. But he was afraid of snakes and scorpions till the end of his life. This he used to say and even acknowledge in writing. He kept by his bedside, at night, potassium permanganate and tartaric acid so that in case of a bite, he might use them speedily. But he never allowed snakes or scorpions to be killed. They used to be caught and released at a distance. He believed that these creatures bite and sting only when provoked.

125

Observance of celibacy was compulsory in the Ashram. Therefore, men and women lived separately. Still, this rule was relaxed, like others, in case of the sick and suffering. If one of a couple fell ill, the other would stay with her or him as the case might be. During Anjana's sickness a new-comer like me was allowed to stay with her. Not only this, but Bapu came once a day to inquire after her health and to give detailed directions regarding her diet and treatment. He himself used to apply tincture of iodine to her gums as she had pyorrhoea. Though he was strict about his own diet, he generously permitted some old inmates to make their own food arrangements in view of their likes and dislikes and live separately.

126

Pratap passed urine with difficulty. It was probably due to a tight foreskin. As he cried with pain one night, a sister informed Bapu that Anjanabehn's child shrieked with pain the previous night. Bapu sent for us at breakfast time and admonished us. After examining Pratap, he gave us a letter to Dr. Hariprasad Desai of Ahmedabad, in his own handwriting, and directed us to leave immediately for Ahmedabad to get the child treated. We carried out his orders gratefully. Such was his parental care for the inmates!

127

Anjanadevi was suffering from two diseases: pyorrhoea and colitis. Pratap was 9 months old at the time. Bapu advised discontinuance of mother's milk in the interest of the child as well as the mother.

He was therefore weaned. He cried at night. Hearing him cry Bapu himself came to him and gave him currants to eat. The tip came in handy, and we daily used to give him currants previously soaked in cow's milk. He thus gave us personal relief. But, in order that others might not be disturbed at night, he removed us to another hut on the bank of the Sabarmati river.

128

I had not been selected for inclusion in the Dandi march. In view of Anjanadevi's poor health and because of his desire to initiate me further into the constructive work of the Ashram, Bapu wanted me to stay behind for some time more. But when the little salt agitation, once criticized and ridiculed, assumed the proportions of a hurricane, I could not hold myself in check. Prominent workers of Ajmer also wanted me. I reached Dandi in company of Chhotelalji and met Bapu. In view of my own desire, the demand from colleagues and the needs of Rajasthan, Bapu permitted me to take part in it. At the same time, he did not overlook my needs, and instructed the Ashram manager to keep sending me money for my requirements.

129

In those days, Madhyabharat was included in Ajmer for purposes of Congress organization. Among the volunteers who had come from Malwa (Madhyabharat) for offering Salt Satyagraha was a wrestler. He did no work but demanded railway fare for the return journey. At the time I was Secretary of the Provincial Congress Committee. I explained to the volunteer that if he had courted imprisonment, he would have been

entitled to the fare of the return journey. But since he had done nothing for the Congress, he was not entitled to it. He did not accept my view, and made an attack upon me. Though I was known to be excitable by nature, I did not retaliate and even stopped other volunteers from belabouring the foolish fellow. This was a result of my association with Gandhiji and the influence of his teachings.

130

I got a year's rigorous imprisonment in connection with the Salt Satyagraha. I already had had a taste of jail life on a few previous occasions, but this time several other workers had also been sentenced. They would keep me company. Being in A class, I had to experience no particular difficulty. But I gained new experiences and profited from them because of my association with Bapu. One of them was that I learnt to be accommodating in community life. The other one was that I became quickly conscious of an error, and tried to conquer false pride. Relating to these is herewith reproduced an interesting incident from my daily diary:

"Towards the end of August (1930), the jailor so conducted himself both in language and action — which might have been due to overwork or temparament — that the prisoners became annoyed with him. I too lost my temper. Perhaps I became more thermic in contrast to what was expected of me. Man easily forgets favours but spotlights wrongs. If the credit and the debit sides be balanced, much unpleasantness could be avoided. Although I decided from the very beginning to take the minimum of the advantages offered, I had at least enjoyed his good behaviour. But frail is man's nature. The Superintendent ordered us to be lined up

for parade. In fact, it was my duty as a Satyagrahi to observe the jail discipline and to obey the authorities. But our self-respect excited the ego in us. What we would have condemned in others, we adopted ourselves by way of justification. We became oblivious to the fact that we were Satyagrahis as well as prisoners.... Especially when the jailor beseeched us to line up for parade, we should have acceded to his request; but we did not. Who was there to come forward and counsel us that perhaps we were ourselves in the wrong.

"...The clash took place. We committed one more blunder in adopting a wrong weapon from the point of view of strategy as well as principle. We decided to defy all regulations and to tease the opponents in addition. The slogans reeked of individual violence which continued even after the jailor had expressed regrets before our representatives and was even prepared to make amends. The matter came to such a pass that even favourable proposals appeared otherwise. So, hunger strike was chosen as the weapon. This was my opinion. Firstly, the principal workers would lend more support. Secondly, instead of getting excited, the authorities would feel sympathy for us....

"I escaped a beating in the first round of violence and was treated to mere rough handling. But I was one of those who were sentenced on the 5th of September to wearing of fetters till the 15th. I was also put in a solitary cell like others. However, these eleven days were full of interest.

"Now started the process of self-searching.... I recalled Bapu's views on prison life... and recollected his conception of conduct of a Satyagrahi. It came upon me that we had strayed...and that a false sense of

prestige, anger and imprudence had resulted in loss of humility, soberness and reason. We adopted the policy of others and forsook our own. Why did we not give proof of honesty of purpose by undergoing self-suffering according to Bapu's directions? Why did we forget the limitations of our power? Why did we condemn the whole man for a few wrong actions of his? Being lovers of discipline, why did we run away from showing respect to the authorities? This false sense of prestige is at the root of so many conflicts outside; why is it being given importance here? Why did the Superintendent's stubbornness succeed in deflecting us from the path of discipline which we wanted our juniors to observe outside? Why did we smell a rat in everything that the authorities did? Why should there have been so much intolerance towards those who could not accommodate our over-sensitiveness? Such questions came to my mind one after the other. A load appeared to have been lifted from my mind. But I lacked the nerve to own my guilt. Eventually, Providence gave me the strength . . . and decided that I should tell all this frankly to the Superintendent, whatever be the outcome. Truth is one's duty. . . . We were called before him on the 15th. Neither a sense of pride nor fear of my companions stood in the way and I poured out everything to him.

"On the whole the settlement was honourable and the experience I thus gained, invaluable."

I pioneered in owning a mistake and I felt relieved at this. My impulsive nature realized the value of Bapu's teachings for the first time.

131

When we were released as a result of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, Jamnalalji, in his capacity as Chairman of the Gandhi Seva Sangh, wanted to enroll me as a member of the Sangh. From the ideological point of view, there was no difficulty in the way, but I was pledged to serve in the Indian States, and there was no provision in the programme of the Sangh to meet this situation. Jamnalalji considered inclusion of this item at this stage as favouritism. But he wanted to admit me all the same. It was, therefore, decided to consult Bapu on the point, who said, " I have drawn up a programme of the work to be done in the Indian States in the Constitution of *The Princes' and People's Service Society* and that is acceptable to Ramnarayan. Therefore, there should be no difficulty in his accepting the membership of the Sangh." I joined. Bapu was always ready to remove any genuine difficulty encountered by his workers.

132

In the National Week of 1931, I was entrusted with the work of organizing Khadi hawking. In this connection, I had an opportunity of meeting two English officers. When I explained to them the economics behind the use of Khadi, they purchased quite a lot of it. I also noticed that they evinced personal regard for Bapu, and a desire to understand him. Further, I perceived in them the effects produced by Bapu's bold arguments and his method of dignified appeal. As was usual with Englishmen in those days, Mr. Coatsworth, the Superintendent

of the railway workshop enquired, "If the English retire from India, how will the Hindus and Musalmans get along together?" I repeated what Bapu had said to Commander Kenworthy a year ago. "We were here even before you came. Where you have not penetrated, there people are living all the same in peace and tranquility. And if Germany were to occupy England and state that if she were to quit England then the Protestants and the Roman Catholics, or the English and the Scotch would come to loggerheads, would you allow Germany to continue to occupy your country? After all, this is our country; why are you so deeply concerned about its affairs? It is we who should be anxious about it." The gentleman had no reply to make.

Similarly, as I appealed in Bapu's way to his nobler instinct when the British Vice-Principal of the Mayo College insulted our National Flag, Principal Stove did not hesitate to tender a written apology.

133

The removal of untouchability became a compulsory item of the Congress programme right from the beginning of Gandhiji's fight for independence. As a result of reformist movements and the efforts of social organizations untouchability had begun to be condemned in progressive circles of Hindu society. But it still had a firm hold on people in general. To make matters worse, the British Government, headed by Ramsay Macdonald, tried to divide the nation into three parts, instead of the then existing two, by creating a new and separate class of so-called depressed classes like the Mohammedans. Gandhiji had already sounded a warning at the Round Table Conference that if such

a thing came about, he would resist it with his life. When the British Government published the Communal Award, and created a separate electorate for the scheduled castes, in the year 1932, Mahatma Gandhi declared from the Yeravda jail itself that if the Hindus would not efface the blot of untouchability, and if the British Government did not alter the decision to split up Hindu society, he would go on a fast unto death.

Accordingly, the fast was launched. It rocked the sub-continent from one end to the other. Countless people expressed their sense of devotion and sympathy for their godly leader by observing fasts and *hartals*, by holding public meetings and by taking out processions. They proved that although a large number of people may not readily accept his views on account of orthodoxy, they considered him a great man, the soul of Hindu society and its spiritual messenger, and hence they would not suffer Gandhiji to pass away. Eventually, both Hindu leaders and the British Government had to accept Gandhiji's conditions and, at the critical stage, the fast came to an end. New life once again manifested itself throughout the country. The frustration created among the people due to the slackening of the political struggle was replaced by hope at the prospect of ushering in a big social reform. It was the result of pure Satyagraha on the part of a single frail man that a great power had to alter a major decision of its own; and also the Hindu orthodox element had to receive a big jolt. Politician that I was, and that I loved to be, I decided henceforth to devote all my energies to the removal of untouchability from our society.

134

Bapu was clever and foresighted. He made good use of this unique awakening. On the one hand, he created an All-India organization to work for the eradication of untouchability and for the uplift of the depressed classes and, on the other, sought facilities from the Government for carrying on his work towards the fulfilment of the above objectives fron inside the jail. This included the editing of the *Harijan*, issuing statements to the press in connection with the above work, exchanging correspondence freely and meeting people. It was a unique instance of a political rebel getting all these facilities as a prisoner! This was due to the mystic power and non-violent force of Satyagraha and to Bapu's influence and winning ways. The Mahatma discharged his obligations so wonderfully that it speaks volumes for his being not only an ideal hero but also an ideal prisoner.

135

The Harijan Sevak Sangh was now established. Shri Amritlal Thakkar became its General Secretary. He was well known for his long services for the uplift of the Bhils, his sympathy with the oppressed, and for his simple life. He was, therefore, popularly known as Thakkar Bapa (father). Though he insisted on discipline and industriousness on the part of his fellow-workers, yet he maintained affectionate relations with them. He, therefore, like a magnet, attracted many workers to his side. He was the soul of the Sangh. That a better selection for the task could not have been made, was proved by time and experience, and showed how keen a sense of understanding men Bapu possessed!

136

Having organized the Central Office, Thakkar Bapa came to Ajmer in connection with the organization of the provincial branch. He offered me its secretaryship. I had seen him at one or two meetings of the Indian States' People's Conference but I had not had a personal direct talk with him up till now. His forthrightness, sincerity and humility so completely won me over that I could not escape. But the two persons, whose advice I considered necessary before accepting the responsibility, were in jail — Bapu and Jamnalalji. Bapa took upon himself to secure their consent for me. The biggest hurdle in my path had already been crossed because of Bapu's fast, since I knew that one of the causes, that contributed to his decision to fast, was that he knew that the Harijans of Western Rajasthan were undergoing great hardships at the hands of caste Hindus in getting water. I was itching, being a Rajasthani myself, to atone for the sins of the people of my province. The unseemly quarrels in politics had begun to cause me nausea. Now, a fresh field, that would enable me to serve directly the trodden and the oppressed of my dear Rajasthan, lay before me. I, therefore, bowed to Bapa's command and joined forces with him with courage. In this also the prime motive was the knowledge that it was a part of Bapu's work and that I could lend a supporting hand to the mountain of responsibility that he was shouldering on behalf of us — the downtrodden Indians.

137

Our province was the stronghold of political, social and religious orthodoxy. Caste consciousness was at its highest. One could see caste distinctions in all walks of life. There were several governments and they enjoyed unbridled powers. The princes looked upon all activities which tended to create awakening among the masses with suspicion. The Satyagraha movement was on. The authorities were therefore very vigilant. The British also counselled the rulers that Congressmen intended to create political unrest, under cover of Harijan uplift work, and hence they should be on guard. I had the reputation of being a leading political worker in the province. Ajmer had earned notoriety among educated and philanthropic circles for its internecine political wrangles. Thus, the situation was fraught with many pitfalls. But, once again, Bapu's personality and his fast, the sacredness and sublimity of the mission and his superb method of organizing and carrying out programmes — all contributed to make my way smooth in this new undertaking of mine.

138

As soon as Thakkar Bapa left for Delhi, I took up the constitution of the Princes' and People's Service Society. Bapu had prepared this constitution in 1929; its chief points were humility, skill and truthfulness. In drafting the provincial constitution, we went a step further and laid down that the paid workers not only would not join the Satyagraha movement but would not also take part in politics at all. Except for the States of Bundi, Jaipur and Mewar, where my entry

was banned, I toured all the other States of Rajputana. I concentrated on the areas where there was no public life at all. Wherever I went, I informed the Diwan and the police authorities in advance of my impending visit. I also told them that the Sangh intended to work in co-operation with the authorities, and if they objected to my entry, I would not come, and that if they were against any particular item of the programme it would not be launched. By following this technique of Bapu's, that is, of previously reassuring the opponents, I found that it worked so well that out of 21 States, only Banswara banned my entry. Later, Banswara changed its policy, and invited me. On reaching a State, I made it a point to first meet the Diwan and other high officials and remove their doubts before proceeding with my work. The result was that no State objected to Harijan uplift work, and a few of them even helped us in this worthy cause. The orthodox Sanatanists also did not obstruct my work. I first met their leaders and explained our work. I could thus, to some extent, weaken their opposition. Everywhere I found a few reformists, a few Harijan sevaks and one or two workers. Achieving so much success in unexpected places was due only to Gandhiji's powerful personality.

139

I experienced a great but pleasant surprise on the day when a procession was taken out from the crossing of the Naya Bazar of Ajmer. The place was the stronghold of orthodoxy. Not only did lawyers, doctors and other educated persons accompany the procession, but also even shopkeepers and other orthodox persons joined us. Each one of them picked up a broom and a basket, uttered slogans and joined the chorus of songs

on the subject of Harijan uplift. When this long procession of surging humanity passed through a locality inhabited by orthodox people, their bewilderment was interesting to behold, and women looked from the roofs of houses with eyes dazed and fixed. When Harijans saw caste Hindus sweep their locality, they were amazed. Everything pointed to the fact that the frail and half-naked saint had brought about a genuine social revolution in the country.

140

In 1934 Bapu undertook a tour of India throughout its length and breadth for furthering Harijan cause. He kept an eye on the intensive as well as the extensive aspects of the work, and developed both simultaneously, since he considered them complementary and indispensable to each other. It was necessary to have thousands of devoted workers, a nationwide atmosphere and enormous funds. For all this a countrywide tour was essential.

141

Bapu was not only a deft organizer, but also a revolutionary reformer. He planned to pierce the citadel of orthodoxy by touring the South, first of all, and decided to attack its impregnable defences in Tamilnad, Andhra and Malabar. These were the regions where humans were not only untouchable but also unseeable and unapproachable. It was considered profane to touch them, or be crossed by their shadow or to look at them. On seeing a caste Hindu approach, these unfortunate people had to conceal themselves

behind the trunk of a tree, or any other screen that came in handy. Only a man of the toughest courage would dare to grapple with the problem.

142

I had a chance to accompany Bapu for nearly a month on this tour. He gave me a jolt at the very beginning. Shri Chandrashankar Shukla was junior to me. Pointing towards him, Bapu inquired, " Will you work under him?" I did feel hurt at the suggestion and even Jamnalalji, who was standing nearby in the Birla House at Delhi, looked astonished. He knew my nature. He feared lest I should refuse. But the desire to know Bapu at close quarters, by living in his company day and night and to study the Harijan movement overpowered me, and it did not take me long to decide. I replied: "Yes". I found that Bapu gave preference to an expert in a particular line without taking into consideration his status or intelligence in other spheres. From the point of view of proper training, and with a view to creating a sense of equality, he placed men under women in kitchen work, learned men under illiterate technicians in Khadi work, well-to-do men under poor people in scavenging work, and old and experienced workers under neo-Gandhites.

143

During winter, I accompanied Bapu from Delhi. As Delhi was very cold, I put on thick woollens. I had no idea of the difference in the temperatures of the North and the South. We reached Bezwada in the morning. I alighted with the thick coat on. What a crowd awaited Bapu! The heat made me perspire profusely while the

large crowd made me nervous. I felt suffocated and began to lose consciousness. All this happened within a minute or two. In the meanwhile, Bapu thought of me and looked back. He at once took me into the cordon formed by the volunteers. If Bapu had not been vigilant and thoughtful about his companions, I don't know what might have happened to me. At lunch time, he narrated to us how in Bezwada itself in 1921, he extricated himself from the crowd and reached the place where he was staying. He also gave tips on protecting oneself in a crowd. At the same time, he drew our attention from the geographical point of view to the climatic conditions of the various regions, and advised us to clothe ourselves accordingly.

144

It is often said about great men that they do not radiate much magnetism and charm at close range as they do from a distance. I found the converse of it in Gandhiji. He said what he believed; he practised what he preached and asked others to follow his lead. He regularly carried out his daily duties of praying, walking, spinning, massage and taking food in spite of his crowded programme. He enjoyed sound sleep, kept himself fit, wore a cheerful countenance and possessed a calm temper. So superb was his will-power!

145

Many entertained the fear that Hindu orthodoxy would conflict with Gandhiji's revolutionary campaign, that his popularity would wane and that his political influence decline. In their opinion, such considerations motivated the British Government to permit Gandhiji uncommon facilities in jail, to release him outright and

to permit him to work freely after release. But I witnessed myself that wherever he went, he was greeted by large throngs of people; money poured liberally into the Harijan Fund coffers and, barring stray cases here and there, they unstintedly supported his mission. While this is a tribute to the thoughtfulness of the Hindu mind, it also proves Gandhiji's courage of conviction. Another striking proof of the latter is that he never appeared at the window of his compartment to receive the greetings of the crowds between 9 p.m. and 5 a.m. People shouted "Mahatma Gandhiki Jai" at the top of their voice out of blind devotion, ignorance and obstinacy, stormed at his compartment and even thumped upon the shutters. But Bapu never yielded. When he considered a practice unreasonable, objectionable or improper, he never yielded to it even when his near ones were concerned. Thus, by his personal example he taught the people to be restrained and disciplined without caring about its consequences.

146

I became aware in this tour of Gandhiji's passionate love for the national language. Although he was not very familiar with Hindi himself, he invariably spoke it, carried on correspondence in it and delivered addresses also in it in Hindi-speaking areas. Even in the South, he mainly spoke in Hindi. His speech was translated, sentence by sentence, into Tamil or Telugu, as the case might be by someone of the local workers. He delivered an address in English but rarely. In this manner, he combined the popularization of Hindi with his Harijan uplift work.

147

In this tour, I found that he tried to understand and assimilate as much of the substance as he could of the view-point of those who did not agree with him. He would drive his point home through reasoning, and always protected his opponents against his own followers' excited denunciations, even if the former were rough in their dealings. I observed that, on occasions, when the Sanatanists said something bitter, Bapu took it with a smile, but when he observed a threat in what they said, he never gave in. Bapu possessed this trait of a leader to a remarkable degree.

148

The Mahatma possessed the knack of turning people's admiration for him to useful account. As he put his head out of the window of his carriage to greet the crowds, he simultaneously stretched out his hand for donations to the Harijan Welfare Fund. People used to be eager to touch Bapu's hand. So, currency notes, coins and small pieces of jewellery were dropped into his hands. In this fashion, he collected hundreds of rupees in no time at all! At the end of his address, he used to send the workers among the audience with bags in their hands to collect donations for the Fund. Often, the bags came back full, and thus thousands of rupees were quickly collected. This Kathiawadi *bania* also made a good business of selling his autograph. Countless young boys and girls were anxious to obtain his autograph which was priced at five rupees. Even this yielded a handsome amount. Some women offered pieces of their jewellery. They received some special treatment in that Bapu in-

vited them to his compartment or room, as the case might be, and allowed them to present their gifts in person. He would utter to them a few words by way of wit, blessings or advice in order to cheer them as they left.

149

How much importance he attached to the question of Hindi was revealed to me in the following way. Shri Chandrashankar Shukla used to write the weekly letter of the tour for the English edition of the *Harijan*. I used to translate it into Hindi for use in the *Harijan sevak*. One day, as Bapu listened to the translation, as usual, he inquired, "Can't you write the weekly letter independently in Hindi?" "I can do so," I replied, "but I fear it may not be up to the mark. Besides, your main paper is the *Harijan*. It is only the translation that goes into the *Harijan sevak*." "No, no," replied Gandhiji, "you are not correct to infer that. I bring out the *Harijan* in English as I have to do so, as there are people in Government service, in foreign countries and in the country itself, who do not understand Hindi and I have to reveal my ideas to them. I have, therefore, to use the English language much as I dislike doing so. For the masses, Hindustani can be *the* medium, and the masses are my chief concern. My difficulty is that while I have with me men like Mahadev and Pyarelal who know English and can very well express my thoughts in it, I have a dearth of men who may be equally well up in Hindi." After that, I wrote one or two letters independently in Hindi and he approved of them. But my health broke down and as I was obliged to return to Ajmer in the midst of the tour, the new arrangement was interrupted.

150

My main job in the tour was to take care of Bapu's Hindi correspondence, which had increased in volume on account of the Harijan movement. He did not like to give the important task of replying on his behalf to newcomers. Even his old associates enjoyed this privilege only to a limited extent. As far as he could manage, he replied himself, though briefly. Bapu showed partiality to women, children, Harijans, students, workers, members of the backward classes and foreigners in the matter of granting interviews and correspondence which he acknowledged, as far as possible, in his own handwriting. He used to call me at lunch time, and after listening to the letters read, he dictated to me the points for reply. If there were letters to which he wanted to reply himself, he kept them apart. I prepared replies, and got them signed before the clearance hour. A few points may be mentioned here with regard to his correspondence.

His letters were, generally, brief. He possessed that style of writing which packed a lot of sense in just a few sentences. He stressed neatness. He did not like scoring or scribbling, as he thought these indicated carelessness and thoughtlessness. He always insisted on beautiful lettering and frequently criticized his own handwriting. The last and most important consideration was that of economy. If he could do with a postcard, he would never use an envelope. Like drafts of articles for newspapers his replies too he wrote out on wrappers of newspapers or waste paper or on blank spaces of postcards etc. As far as he was concerned, he did not believe in secrecy. But out of regard for other people, he would

use an envelope in case the reply was confidential or long. He would invariably revise a letter and if it could not be done he would make a note on a corner to this effect. He was meticulously careful about his correspondence.

One day he said, "I dictate to you points for reply. This takes a lot of time and the turn-out of work is little. You now appear to be quite familiar with my ideas and political thoughts. Can't you listen to the points and write down the replies yourself? This will save time and the output will be greater." I felt as though Bapu wanted to put my memory to test. I replied, "My father also used to do the same. There is no harm in trying this method." From that day onwards, we kept to this plan as long as I remained on tour with him. Thus did Bapu test the abilities of his associates in such simple ways and allowed their talents to develop and expand.

151

It was during this handling of the correspondence that I discovered his concern for the correctness of language. As we all know, educated people are not only addicts to the use of the English language both in speech and writing but also to freely interspersing its words and phrases in their dialects. Bapu disliked these practices. In the course of correspondence during this tour, I noticed him point out to several young men that it was no use writing incorrect English or mixing up two languages. On occasions, he would quote somebody's incorrect language, and would inquire of the youngmen of what use it was to write in a foreign language if one could not do so properly? As a result of this gentle rebuke, some would write back saying that in future they would correspond only in Hindi, and if they were obliged to use

English, they would try to do so correctly. Bapu availed himself of every opportunity, no matter what, to guide his countrymen along the right path.

152

When Gandhiji set off on the Harijan tour, he was accompanied by Dr. Moonje from Nagpur to Wardha. The conversation turned to Hindu-Muslim relations, and on the alleged policy of appeasing the Muslims. Dr. Moonje's theme was that by conceding the unreasonable demands of the Muslims, we have made them even more so! His major complaint was that Muslims kidnapped Hindu women and molested them. Bapu replied, "I deal with them in my own way, and have a particular method of dealing with the high-handedness of everybody. I reason it out with the wrong-doer. If I fail in my attempts, I undergo a suffering myself and thus try to change his heart. If I should see a sister being molested, I would give my life to save her. Your way is different. Even taking it as wrong, I believe in the sincerity of your faith. But why do you force me to give up my way? If you do not approve of it, you should act on yours. If you consider it proper to raise the sword in order to protect women, why do you not make use of it? One is judged by how he acts on his convictions."

Dr. Moonje became speechless. I recalled the talk I had with him four or five years ago in the Sardar Hotel at Bombay. I had gone there in connection with the Indian States' People's Conference. Dr. Moonje did not favour this movement because most of the Princes were Hindu, and it was they who were to be the targets mainly. He said, "Mohammedans behave knavishly towards our womenfolk. We must fight them out." When

I replied that Hindu Rajas and feudal chiefs are no better in this respect, he said, "After all, they are our brothers. We should forbear this and should try to reform them by peaceful persuasion." I thereupon said, "Muslims are also our countrymen. Why not deal with them also in the same way?" So, I gathered from the Bapu-Moonje talk, that views apart, one must act upon one's ideals and principles in order to be sincere.

153

I had begun wearing Khadi even previous to the Nagpur session of the Congress held in 1920. The Mahatma had visited Wardha in the mean time and my wife and I had become Khadi wearers since our very first contact with him. When I reached my village Neemka Thana after the Ahmedabad session of the Congress in 1921, my mother saw me in my new style of dress. She was dismayed to find me in a shirt made of coarse Khadi and a *dhoti* of the same cloth with a prominent seam in the middle of it. She knew that I was fond of fine togs. She thought that those were the days for me to have a taste of life. To crown all, I asked mother to teach me spinning. "Yes, this is lacking. Now learn the feminine crafts also!" came the reply. I explained to her the economic point of view, the Swadeshi point of view but nothing would convince her. I told her that Gandhiji wants to turn out of our country Englishmen who are beaf-eaters, and to provide employment to the widows in their own homes, so that they might lead a chaste life. It was necessary from this point of view to follow the instructions of Gandhiji. His kind-heartedness made a direct appeal to my mother and she thereafter began to teach me spinning regularly. Thus, one aspect or the other of Bapu's philosophy touched even bigoted hearts.

154

Gandhiji called the human body "brother ass". He obtained work from it as from an ass, but considered it a divine medium for rendering service. In order therefore to get the best out of it, he advocated taking great care of it and affording it rest, exercise, regularity, cleanliness, nourishment, etc. Accordingly, he himself took great care of his time, and diet, and expected his associates also to do likewise. He attached such importance to bodily health that where its interests so required he would give up all work himself, and would expect others also to do so in similar situations. But at the same time, he made the sick and the convalescent work according to their health and capacity so that they did not become slothful or negligent.

155

An important leader of the Rajputana Harijan Sevak Sangh promised a contribution for the fund but did not actually pay it. Reminders proved of no avail. I inquired of Bapu what should be done. He at once replied, "Tell him either to redeem his word or to resign." I acted accordingly, and the donation was paid. Bapu did not care whether the leader might be offended and whether this might adversely affect the cause. He was very particular about keeping the pledged word and expected others to do the same.

156

At Madras, the Marwaris and the Gujaratis presented addresses of welcome in which Bapu's services were mentioned and Rajasthan, Gujarat and Kathiawad glorified. In reply, he said, "A welcome address should

not be too full of praise. After making mention of the services of the recipient, we can express a determination to follow his example — this much is natural as well as proper. The address should mainly mention the problems and difficulties of the organization which presents the address so that the guest may offer advice for their solution. Also, those communities, who settle in provinces other than their own with a view to earning money, should give secondary importance to the welfare of their home provinces and primary consideration to those where they have settled down. They should merge themselves into the life of their adopted provinces and spend their money and time mainly for their welfare."

This gave me, for the first time, a concept of an ideal address of welcome and the idea that Rajasthan's settlers should be faithful and loyal to their adopted provinces. This tended to decrease feelings of provincialism, produce a sense of national unity and diminish exploitation.

157

When I returned to Ajmer, galvanized by the experience gained by having the constant company of Bapu and benefiting therefrom, I found that a net-work of Harijan Sevak Samitis had spread throughout Rajasthan during the course of the year. Undoubtedly, much of the credit went to the indefatigable workers in the field; still, looking at the speed with which schools were set up and filled with students, at the number of Harijans who gave up their drinking habits, eating of carrion and other vices, and at the number of workers (about one hundred) who spread themselves out into the field, one could attribute the phenomenal success to Bapu's compelling personality and the nobleness of the cause.

Impelled by these two motive forces, the workers, when they came to a training camp set up for the purpose in a village near Ajmer, bore the hard conditions of the work cheerfully. The training was to last six months. It was compulsory for the trainees to wear Khadi, learn spinning, carding, etc., and to study the Gandhian literature and the principles of education. They cleaned the latrines, ground flour with *chakkis*, swept the dirty parts of the village, dug earth, cooked food, drew water from the wells and did all types of personal and community work of the Ashram. They would not have accepted these chores despite their belonging to a backward province, if they were not fired with missionary zeal. It was due to this motive force that they cut themselves asunder from political ambitions, shed all prejudices of caste and untouchability, lived and ate with everybody — not a small thing in orthodoxy-ridden society — and stuck to their guns and continued to receive training, while suffering from climatic rigours, pecuniary difficulties and domestic and social opposition. So powerful was the motive force that many of those workers are labouring in the field even today, and some others have been, or are, Ministers.

158

A few revolutionaries also joined the Harijan work at Ajmer. I had, as one of them, personally known them as persons of high character and courage with a strong sense of duty. I knew that they would not hesitate to commit decoities in order to get money. That they would even degrade themselves to the level of committing theft, I could never imagine. I trusted them.

I am not aware what socialistic or revolutionary urge impelled them to consider the Harijan Sevak Sangh

a capitalistic organization. Abusing the privileges of confidence, they stole into the office, broke open the lock of a drawer of the table and stole a sum of nearly five hundred rupees. This mean act on the part of these pseudo-revolutionaries reacted adversely upon my mind. At that time, I merely had suspicions regarding them, although later, I found them to be justified, for I came to know that they purchased a pistol with that money. The Deputy Superintendent of the C. I. D., Mr. Dogra, became the victim of this pistol, I learnt.

Nevertheless, I did not inform the police in spite of the insistence of friends, but instead consulted Bapu. He advised me not to lodge a complaint with the police but, if they came to know of it by themselves and made inquiries, then we should give them the particulars as we knew them. On our side, we should make inquiries from those we suspected. If they admitted their guilt, returned the money and promised to live honourably in future, we should condone the fault. We did as advised. Such was Bapu's cure for delinquents. He believed in reform through love and not punishment.

159

Gandhiji paid a visit to Ajmer also in connection with his Harijan tour. Simultaneously, there arrived the group of Swami Lalnath which consisted of the Mahatma's orthodox opponents. Wherever Bapu went, it shadowed him, carried black flags and preached against the anti-untouchability work. Bapu was in favour of conceding the same freedom of action to his opponents as he himself had. He therefore took precautions for the safety of the group, and advised his companions and the public to be tolerant of their views. Unfortunately, it so happened that, in spite of precautions, a clash took

place at Ajmer between the protagonists of the two views resulting in violence. Gandhiji felt shocked. He had Swami Lalnath's wound dressed and, called him on the stage, showed his injuries to the audience, made them remorseful, and allowed Lalnath full freedom to express his views. On reaching Karachi, Bapu announced that he would go on a penance fast of seven days in connection with this incident. On reading the news, I turned white and felt heart-broken. I felt better, however, when I learnt from participants in the affray that everything was pre-planned and aimed at discrediting that wing of the local Arya Samaj which was in agreement with our ideals of Harijan uplift. When I disclosed this to Bapu, on his return to Wardha sometime after the fast, he drew a long sigh to express his astonishment and agony. Perhaps he meant to say to what extent the cult of violence can lead a man astray!

160

Some friends reported to Bapu that exaggerated accounts were published about the Harijan work in Rajputana and that actually so many branches did not exist as reported. On reaching Ajmer, Bapu mentioned this to me. Thakkar Bapa was also present at the time. I replied, 'Bapu, the test of the pudding lies in the eating. Thakkar Bapa is familiar with the working arrangements and organization of the work in this province. But even apart from this, you will come to know the truth yourself.' The secretaries and workers from all parts of Rajputana began to offer their respective purses to Bapu at the afternoon meeting as Thakkar Bapa called out their names one by one. I could read from Bapu's face that not only was his doubt removed but also that he was pleased with the work being done in Rajputana. At the conclusion

of the function, he expressed his satisfaction in a short speech but cautioned us against being vain. While thus, Bapu was alert against being misled by people, he was happy to have his misgivings removed. While he gave encouragement, he also cautioned workers against vain glory.

161

Whenever Gandhiji or other prominent leaders came to Ajmer, they stayed with the late Shri Gaurishankar Bhargava. When Bapu went to Ajmer, in connection with the Harijan tour, the Reception Committee arranged for his stay elsewhere. Shri Bhargava was aggrieved, and suggested that the Mahatma should at least pay him a visit. Bapu saw no harm in this. But a few of the workers of Ajmer, whose word carried weight with Bapu, advised him not to do so in view of certain lapses alleged to be connected with Shri Bhargava's personal life. He replied, "If the complaints are true, I should not go." But it is not so easy to prove a complaint as to make one. Eventually, he said, "I cannot base my judgment on mere hearsay. It is my duty to pay a visit to Gaurishankar." He, therefore, went. By acting on the principle of giving Shri Bhargava the benefit of the doubt, he left an indelible mark upon the entire Bhargava family.

162

Soon afterwards, I received a letter from Shri Arjunlal Sethi requesting that Bapu should pay him a visit as well. The letter was imploring and couched in polite language. Once again, the workers stood in the way. Their thesis was that if Gandhiji paid a visit to him, he

would misuse the honour. They even told Bapu that Sethiji carried on propaganda against him. To this, Mahatmaji replied, "I know that he is opposed to me. But that does not constitute an argument for my rejecting his humble request." He asked for my opinion. I said, 'He is such an old worker in the national cause that to raise the question of his gaining prestige does not appear proper. According to your way of thinking, Sethiji's being against you is an argument in favour of your going to his house. It will, I believe, produce a desirable result rather than otherwise.'

And it did happen so. As Bapu reached his house, Sethiji touched his feet, made obeisance, offered a substantial sum for the Harijan Fund, shook off his indifference towards the Congress and began to take a practical interest in its work. Bapu used to wave a magic wand of love and forgiveness, and 'bag' his opponents.

163

Gandhiji asked questions about the Ashram which we had started in a village near Ajmer. I told him that we purchased fruit and vegetables from Ajmer. This surprised him. He said, "In my opinion, you should buy even fruit locally, whatever is available. The vegetables should in any case be from the same village. If articles of your requirements are not grown locally, encourage the villagers to grow them, or you grow your own." As a result, we started our own vegetable garden, and even found a method of using our manure. Bapu always advocated self-sufficiency in the matter of food and clothing.

164

It was perhaps in 1935 or thereabouts, that a meeting of the Central Board of the Harijan Sevak Sangh was in progress in the newly constructed buildings of the Harijan Ashram in Delhi. Being a member, I also attended it. Bapu was, of course, present. Informal talk was going on before the commencement of the meeting proper. During the course of conversation, Shrimati Rameshwari Nehru, the only woman member and Vice-Chairman of the Board, remarked with an air of satisfaction, 'People in my family have never objected to my participation in this work.' Bapu always welcomed an opportunity to gladden, encourage and stimulate his workers to further effort. He remarked, "You are indeed lucky to have a father so generous. You have got a husband too who has given you freedom to act as you like, of course, in worthy causes." The last five words were pronounced after a little pause. Rameshwaribehn's face flushed with pleasure, as the remarks contained a praise also for her dear ones. Others also seemed to have enjoyed this little witticism. I perceived in Bapu a cautious teacher who always gave encouragement.

165

Just then, somebody thought of making fun of Shri Ghanshyamdas Birla. 'So you have got Bapu,' he remarked. Birlaji could hardly say, 'It was essential for him to attend this meeting,' when Bapu seized the opportunity of cracking a joke. "I am wedded to Birlaji," he interjected. "How could it be that he should call and I should not respond?" Birlaji

hung down his head and blushed, while others capitalized on the joke. I learnt from this that though Bapu was humble and loved discipline, he was also capable of subordinating himself to his juniors when they were placed in a responsible position.

166

Perhaps it was in 1928 that I stayed with Bapu for a month at the Sabarmati Ashram. While telling him of my antecedents and life, I mentioned the Rajasthan Seva Sangh.. I told him that the workers of the Sangh did not get more than Rs. 15/- p.m. per head, and even out of this sum, if they saved anything, they returned it to the Sangh. When I narrated my own experience and also said that the President of the Sangh, Shri B. S. Pathik did not draw more than rupees seven or eight per month, Bapu, who was spinning, looked at me with curiosity and said, "The returning of money is something unique as well as worth adopting." Bapu readily adopted anything noble from whomever or wherever it came.

167

A conference of Harijan workers was held on the 26th and 27th June, 1936 in our Ashram at the village Nareli. Bapu attached importance even to this small event and complied to my request by sending the following message:

> The Hindu faith is on trial. They are true servants who have faith in righteousness and love for Harijans, and who are prepared to sacrifice their lives for the cause.

This little message gave us more inspiration than even what two days of deliberations could offer.

171

Sometime in the month of March in 1933, I went to visit Bapu in the Yeravda Jail. I thought that since I was going to meet him in prison, I should take an offering for my *guru*. I thought that I should present to him a pen-picture of the condition of the Harijans in Rajasthan. I therefore placed a sheet of paper before him which bore the heading, "The Harijan of Rajasthan" and which read as follows:

"One is baffled to think to what an extent man must have been degraded to become so heartless and callous, and how this inhumanity to one's fellow-men must have pervaded Hindu society to make one man consider another human inferior even to animals! Those, who preach from the pulpit that all life is equal, have now begun to treat a part of their own society as untouchables and unseeables, as deserving to perform the most repulsive duties, as fit to receive the minimum, cheapest and used clothings and remnants of food, and entitled only to rebukes and insults. All opportunities for their moral, intellectual and spiritual development have been carefully shut off. To touch them, to look at them, and to be crossed even by their shadow came to be counted among the unpardonable sins, so much so that even the doors of the temples were closed to them.

"Under these strangulating circumstances, how can the Harijans receive education, or take to business, or take part in promoting the progress of the country or develop their own natural faculties? They may die of thirst but they cannot draw water from the well or pond. They are anxious to receive education but they

cannot seek admission to a school. If they are hungry, they cannot eat in a hotel or at a tea-shop even on payment. They have an urge to look at the deity but their entry into the temple is forbidden. They cure leather, they dispose off urine and night-soil, they remove the garbage; in fact, they do everything that a mother does, and everything without which society cannot carry on even for a day. But it is Hindu society which does not know how to recompense them for their invaluable services except with contempt, tyranny and exploitation. I saw the night-soil dump of Maloosar Street of Ajmer. When I observed human beings working in the pond of urine and night-soil, I was filled with horror. When I heard that caste Hindus of Malwa enjoy themselves on certain occasions by hitting and breaking the earthen pitchers of night-soil being carried by women on their heads, and by teasing and insulting them, I felt as if the element of humanism was sadly lacking in Hindu society, so that it put the noose of slavery, without compunction, around the neck of certain of its members.

"The tragic tale of their woes does not end here. While caste Hindus are entitled to use wheat and sugar and any other food-stuffs they fancy, the Harijan must perforce be content to cook food for the festive dinners of his community—such as on the occasion of weddings or funerals—with only *bajra** and *gur*†. The caste Hindus can affix golden pinnacles on the domes of their temples but Harijans are forbidden from doing so. If the latter take their bridegrooms on horseback in wedding processions, how will caste Hindus be able everywhere, to afford elephants for their bridegrooms? Harijans are not even permitted to use bicycles! The

* An inferior kind of corn.

† Jaggery or solidified sugar-cane juice.

heavens would fall if the Harijans sat on a cot in front of a caste Hindu, or had a pull at a *hooka* or if a Harijan woman passed in front of him with shoes on.

"Such curses exist among the caste Hindus also between themselves. In a Rajput dominated village, the Vaishyas* and the Harijans have both to suffer humiliation. In his turn, the proud Rajput, employed as a gate-keeper, may be seen saluting the Vaishya mill-owners. A Brahmana was seen begging and cringing before a millionaire Harijan in Jhalawar. The Panditji, the Thakursaheb and the Shethji are seen flattering the Harijan officers in the railway and other departments.

"While cats and dogs can play with them, enter the temples and romp about in the house, the "untouchables" dare not do so. They live in houses which are dark, mere heaps of mud and straw shutting out air and light. They are content with stale and rotten food, with gifts of rejected clothings in exchange for hard labour. They are sometimes subjected to free forced labour for officials. Harijans are doomed to this fate from birth to death. They are expected to be proof against, cold, heat and rain; submit to rebukes, abuses and beatings. How long can these tortures be suffered? What wonder if, under these circumstances, lakhs of them should change religion or become enemies of society and the country?"

On reading the above, Bapu inquired only about two things — the facilities of drinking water for the Harijans, and the night-soil dump of Ajmer. I gave him an account of both. He listened to it and told me in a serious tone, "You write to me from Rajputana about the water conditions. As to the night-soil dump, I shall see it sometime when I go to Ajmer." Thus,

*A commercial community.

out of the entire note, Bapu immediately seized upon the two most important points. He had a remarkable knack for getting at the root of a matter.

172

Soon after reaching Ajmer, I wrote to him as requested, about the position with regard to drinking water. This problem perturbed him so much that the very day he received my letter, he mentioned this to Shri Rajgopalachari during his important talks with him. Mahadevbhai reproduced this in the third part of his diary in the following words:

> "Bapu: Oh! Why should I give up my duty? I do not ask them to change their faith. They are ignorant of the prevailing conditions. Ramnarayan Chaudhry has written me a letter describing the deplorable condition of the Harijans of Western Rajputana. They cannot fetch water from any single well, but get it from the filthy ponds which are meant for animals. How long will they continue to do so?"

On the third day i.e. on the 2nd April, 1933, he wrote me a postcard from the Yeravda prison as follows:

> "I have made use of your letter in the *Harijansevak*. Look for it. Collect donations from D. B. (Diwan Bahadur Harbilas Sharda) and other rich persons for sinking wells. Draw a plan and plot the wells where required. Collect figures about the number of Harijans and their avocation and publish this. Work out the cost of a well.
>
> "Give my blessings to Anjanadevi.
>
> Blessings from Bapu."

173

When Gandhiji reached Ajmer in connection with the Harijan tour and inquired about the programme, the first question he asked was, "Have you included a visit to the night-soil dump in my programme?" When he saw the dump with his own eyes, his face turned pale and he mentioned the scene in the *Harijansevak* under the heading, "The Hell of Ajmer." And now in spite of Ajmer having a popular government, the hell is intact.* So wakeful was he and so indolent are we, his followers! But when I look back, I feel that by his historic fast Bapu shook the Hindu society from its slumberous apathy and rendered unique service to his country and fellowmen by setting Hindus to atone for their sins by taking to Harijan work. Even if he had done nothing else, he would still have become immortal merely on the score of this humanitarian work.

174

When I reached Bagar in the Doongarpur-Banswara area, in connection with the Harijan work, I had a chance to study the condition of the oppressed Bhils. So far as I know, this aboriginal tribe is the poorest community in India. Perhaps one would not find a parallel to their example elsewhere in ignorance, superstition and exploitation. These humans were in a state of utter helplessness at the hands of their rulers

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* This hellish tank of Ajmer has, thanks to the efforts of Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, been turned into a bathing tank for Harijans, the opening ceremony being performed by Shri Morarji Desai.

and usurers. They have no irrigation facilities, and their method of cultivation is primitive; their implements are of poor quality; their cattle are walking skeletons. No one pays heed to their health problems. They receive no medical treatment in case of sickness and, if there is an epidemic, they die in hundreds like insects. Their houses are made of mud, bamboo sticks and burnt-clay tiles. They live, sleep, cook and keep their cattle in a single room. They, however, just manage to exist because of nature's gifts of sun and air, and because of their own chivalrous nature and industrious habits. But they do not get enough either to eat or clothe themselves. They are lucky if they get half a meal and half a dress, and spend the winter nights sleeping by the fireside. Such is the routine of their existence. The States have provided practically no facilities for their education. They are always victims of forced labour, obtained without payment by their masters, and of exploitation by the money-lenders. To crown all, the States have provided them facilities to indulge in drinking. From the social point of view, they are regarded and treated as Harijans.

I placed these facts before Bapu, and suggested that their uplift and betterment should be considered a part of the Harijan work, at least in Rajasthan, and should be financed by the Harijan fund. He asked me to suggest this to Thakkar Bapa. Since Thakkar Bapa had a partiality for the Bhils who are a fine people, he approved of my idea. Bapu relaxed his conditions and included service in the cause of the Bhils in our programme. Bapu indeed worshipped God through service to the poor, the oppressed and the exploited.

175

It was either in 1935, or 1936 that I had begun to suffer from heart attacks. When the Mahatma came to know of this, he called me to Sevagram soon after he had settled there. When I arrived for the first time, he said, "I want to keep you with me but there is scarcity of accommodation here. You would be inconvenienced. Therefore, stay at Bajajwadi but come here everyday with Mahadev and go back also with him. Have breakfast and the evening meal at Wardha and the midday meal with me." Thereafter, Mahadevbhai who used to perform the journey on foot began to take me in Jamnalalji's bullock-cart. I sat next to Bapu at meal times, and he served me with his own hands. The very first day he was so kind and affectionate towards me that I felt as if my mother were alive or that she had re-appeared in the form of Bapu!

176

The arrangements for my meals had been entrusted to Shri Radhakrishna Bajaj. I realized, for the first time, the warmth and affection of this apparently curt and dry old student of mine. He wanted to give me almond pudding the first thing in the morning. I was very strict in those days about keeping to the Sabarmati Ashram diet. When I asked Bapu about this, he said, "No harm. Take it." My younger brother, Durgaprasad was with me. Seizing an opportunity, he said to Gandhiji, "Brother feels dull. Is there any harm if he plays cards for a while?" Bapu replied at once, "There is no harm." Both the replies were contrary

to my expectations. I realized how gentle and understanding he was towards the sick and also to his followers. Except on matters of principle, he showed great flexibility.

177

During those days I was deeply hurt by the behaviour and ideas of an intimate co-worker. As I mentioned this to Bapu, casually, tears appeared in my eyes. He too was touched and said, "Everybody has to experience such things. The other day ... came. Having read his articles, I had asked him to come over to discuss the matter concerned. As we talked, he began to sob like a child. He said, 'Bapu, my heart opens to you but mind closes against you, and I am sorely grieved at this. Tell me what should I do?' I told him plainly, 'Set the dictates of your heart aside for the time being, and only follow the promptings of your mind. You will discover the way yourself.' You have relieved your feelings by being frank with me. Tell me, to whom can I unload my heart? My advice to you also, therefore, is that you should tell your colleague that he should put aside the consideration of your relations with him, and should be guided by his conscience." Thus, by disclosing his own frustration he soothed my pain. I now realized that the Mahatma believed that one should follow what his intelligence guides him to do. I also learnt that love should be an instrument not of bondage but of freedom. For the first time, I became aware of the futility of the allegation that Gandhiji's associates are blind followers or that they encourage dogmatism.

178

Bapu's grandson, Kantilal, was studying then in the Medical College at Mysore. He came to Sevagram during his holidays. One day, when I went to Bapu, an argument was taking place between the two. Kantibhai wanted an extra *dhoti* while Bapu considered it unnecessary. I am not aware how long the argument had continued before I came upon the scene; but it was carried on for nearly fifteen minutes after I got there. Bapu was firm. After Kantilal had left, I could not help remarking, 'Bapu, your time is so precious and the issue was so trivial....' Hardly had I uttered these words when Bapu interrupted saying, "I have caught your point. The question is not whether it is a small matter or big, but of the principle that is involved. We have to worship the god of the poor. Therefore, we should receive from the people the minimum and give the maximum. To spend even a pice when one can avoid it hurts me like theft. If there is a genuine need to spend, you may spend a thousand rupees. Money is nothing compared to a man's essential need. You know that I spend money like water on the treatment of Balkoba. I am not the least worried about that. But when I feel that an extra *dhoti* is unnecessary for Kanti, how can I get him one?" In fact, Gandhiji was a true guardian of public money and dealt with his own workers strictly.

179

A close associate of Bapu's, having strayed from the path pointed out by the Mahatma, was running after the mirage. He needed some money, and asked for it through Mahadevbhai, who had a soft corner in his

heart for the delinquent. Though Mahadevbhai wanted to plead for him, he knew Bapu's mind. Yet, hesitatingly, he broached the subject: 'Bapu,' he said, '...has written a letter. He appears to be in some financial difficulty. Can we give him some help?' "No." replied Bapu resolutely. "Can we aid even a near friend when he treads a wrong path? Only when we are co-travellers in righteousness, can we be comrades. Write to... that as long as he continues like this, he should expect no help from us." Verily, Bapu was as hard as a stone and as soft as a flower!

180

We had built a pucca house at the village Nareli for the Ashram in connection with Harijan work on behalf of the Rajasthan Sevak Mandal. For the above purpose, some money of the Harijan Sevak Sangh was utilized, and shown as outstanding against the name of the Mandal. I saw no harm in this as, sometimes, the Mandal's money was advanced for the needs of the Sangh. But Thakkar Bapa was very strict in this respect. When he saw the accounts he reprimanded me in a way that was intolerable to a man of my temperament. I wrote back to him, 'When on previous occasions, the Mandal's money was utilized similarly for the sake of the Sangh, you neither objected to it nor thanked the Mandal for it. Now, that you are so critical, I resign forthwith.'

Bapa was a strong-willed man. My letter produced no particular effect upon him. Instead of accepting my resignation, he showed my letter to Bapu who was at Delhi at that time. Bapu called me and explained: "There is no charge of misappropriation against you. The complaint is that you have loaned out a part of

the funds of one organization to another without permission. It is wrong on principle. It could be mere negligence to loan out an institution's money; but it is dangerous to borrow. Take back your resignation and, in future, make it a point not to transfer the funds of one institution to another without proper permission." I admitted my mistake, and also learnt a valuable lesson. In this fashion did Bapu explain to the workers their errors and teach them better ways.

181

As part of our Harijan uplift programme, we pleaded with the Harijans to give up drinking, and the practice of eating carrion. We also tried to persuade them to give up eating flesh of any kind. One day, I read a report in a paper that Bapu said somewhere during his tour of Orissa that since poor people living near the sea coast do not receive proper nourishment from the ordinary type of diet, he did not feel justified in advising them to refrain from eating fish. From that day, I stopped asking the Harijans not to take meat. But this decision of mine was sentimental. From the point of view of principle, my doubts persisted. Those were solved when, a little later, a meeting of the Gandhi Seva Sangh was held at Wardha, and the question of qualification of workers was discussed. I was one of those who were opposed to meat-eaters being enrolled as members. I was puzzled how believers in violence (non-vegetarians) could be made members of an organization based upon non-violence. I am reproducing below the substance of what Gandhiji said on this occasion.

"To insist that those, who have been habituated to eating meat from childhood, and with whom meat eating has become

a natural part of their diet, should give up the habit will be tantamount to committing violence upon them. We shall have to accept their habit as indispensable violence. Of course, we shall not admit such persons as members of the Sangh as eat meat secretly or have recently started eating it or intend doing so."

Bapu's exposition was as much charged with boldness as with non-violence. We had proof of this later when Dr. Syed Mahamood came to the Ashram as a sick person. Bapu got chicken-curry prepared for him. So also, Maulana Azad was free to smoke in the Ashram and tea was prepared for Pt. Motilal Nehru. But these concessions were allowed only to guests. Bapu always carefully discriminated between basic things and minor ones, and was careful not to use compulsion even with his close associates. That is why Kishorlalbhai and Mahadevbhai were allowed to have their private kitchens and use sugar, spices and fried stuff, the use of which was prohibited in the Ashram. In short, Bapu was a practical idealist.

182

I had sufficient chance to study his policy and method as a journalist while working with him as a translator for *Young India* and the *Harijan*, and as one who had to handle correspondence in this connection during the years 1928 and 1930 at Sabarmati and as his companion on the Harijan tour in 1934, and later at Sevagram in 1940. In my opinion, Bapu was an ideal journalist. He regarded this profession as one of a judge dedicated to service. On the one hand, he considered it his foremost aim to support the cause of the oppressed; on the other, he gave suitable advice to writers and correspondents. As a critic, he always tried to be impartial. He neither stinted bringing to light the good points

that he found in an opponent, nor did he falter in drawing attention to the failings of his supporters. He was careful not to do injustice to those against whom he received complaints. Therefore, in the first instance, he would ask the accused to put up their defence in writing. He gave sufficient time for receiving their reply. If the complaints were found to be of a personal nature, and if the person concerned admitted them, he would warn the parties to be careful in future and would not publish the facts. He never published their names without the consent of the parties. In short, he did not like to defame anybody. He wanted to reform them. As a result of this policy, complainants were discouraged from sending false or baseless complaints, or they used to withdraw or amend them, and those who were found in the wrong tried to improve their conduct so that a situation seldom arose when it became necessary to publish names. Not a word could be published in the papers Bapu edited which was not first personally read by him and passed. He would not make an exception to this rule even in the case of his most trusted lieutenants. He attached great importance to his responsibilities, and tried to be just to friend and foe alike.

183

In the years 1938 and 1939 I tried to follow the same policy as an editor and benefited thereby. There were complaints of corruption prevailing in the Railway Workshop at Ajmer. There was dissatisfaction with some of the British officers. I met the General Manager who was an Englishman and explained to him Gandhiji's ideas. I took up the cases of two senior officers. It was decided that whoever would admit his fault and give

a solemn undertaking to desist from such a course in future, would on my recommendation, be given a pardon, and one who insisted on his innocence should be proceeded against. Therefore, I conveyed the charges to both the officers and asked them to explain themselves. I also wrote to them that if they felt embarrassed to write to me, I could meet them personally. They sent me word that they would like to meet me.

The first case dealt with appointments and transfers. The official received money as a bribe from all candidates. After an appointment was made, he refunded the money of unsuccessful parties. I saw him at his bungalow. Placing my hand upon his shoulder, I said, 'You are a Christian. It is Christ's teaching that if you sin, you should own up and abstain from it in future. You are a young man. Live on your salary, and do not try to make money in dubious ways. God will bless you. If you really have been corrupt, then confess and take a vow not to do so in future. I am a humble follower of Gandhiji's. If you trust me, you will not regret it. You will come to no sorry pass at my hands.' He listened to me, head hung down in shame and remorse. Tears appeared in his eyes. At this stage, his wife, who was listening to all this from behind the door, came out and said, 'Mr. Chaudhury, my husband was not corrupt when he came here. Your countrymen tempted him and he fell. I shall be grateful to you and Mr. Gandhi, if you put him on the right track.' From that day onwards, that gentleman gave up accepting illegal gratification. He returned moneys to those whose cases were pending and from whom he had taken in advance, and informed me accordingly in writing!

184

The other gentleman was the Works Manager. When I met him he spoke of these allegations as baseless. But he was shaking and he looked frightened and apprehensive; he felt like owning up, but lacked the moral courage to do so. I even encouraged him by disclosing the satisfactory result of my talk with his countryman and fellow-official, but he could not bring himself to confess. I sent the result of my finding to the General Manager. In a week's time, the first gentleman was transferred to Bombay — as desired by him — and the other was forced to retire and sent back to England.

185

A similar case was that of a Deputy Superintendent of Police at Ajmer. He had earned a bad reputation though he wielded much influence in official circles and the people greatly feared him. Several officials became his sycophants and willing tools. During my absence, some complaints against a few police officials appeared in my weekly journal, the *Navajyoti*. Indirectly they had a bearing upon his behaviour. One day, after my return, he came to my house in the company of a friend of mine. I put him the question straight,' 'Do you accept bribes?' He was taken aback by the forthrightness of the question but made the reply, 'I shall answer this question at the time of my next visit.' On his next visit he said, 'Kindly overlook the past; you will receive no complaint in future.' I took it as an admission of guilt and an assurance of honourable conduct in future. He told me this as I was a close associate of Bapu's and, indeed, as long as he remained at Ajmer thereafter — and he lived there for quite a long time — I received no further complaint against him.

186

The marriage of a young Rajput landlord took place in a well-known ruling class family. The bride's parents did not give the promised amount of dowry. The bridegroom's parents began to harass the bride. The husband went on a *duhag* against his wife, i.e. stopped talking to and meeting her. A kind-hearted gentleman communicated the story to me. I wrote to the husband's father in my capacity of an editor, drawing his attention to his high social status, the glorious history of Rajputana, and to the fact that he had the good luck of being a contemporary of Gandhiji, and implored him to do justice to the innocent girl. It produced the desired effect. On the eighth day, a representative of the Raja came to me to thank me on his behalf, and assured me that the wrong had been righted.

187

One day, a lady came to me from a small State of Rajputana. She made the serious allegation against the Diwan that he had her husband murdered in order to keep her as his mistress. I sent a copy of that statement to the Diwan, who sent for me and told me that the case was false and showed me the papers of the judicial department. When they did not satisfy me, he said, 'Every saint has a past and every sinner a future. I should not have said so, had it not been for the fact that you are a follower of Gandhiji.' I returned satisfied. As a result, instead of keeping her a mistress, he married her, and now she is enjoying title to his extensive property!

188

Once, probably in the year 1923, the aged assistant editor of the *Tribune* of Lahore, Shri Iyengar, came to Ajmer in connection with a holy dip at Pushkar, which is 6 miles from the city. He stayed with me as my guest. During the course of a talk, one day he said, 'Bapu's is the best English in Asia.' My own experience, gained subsequently, convinced me that Bapu was the biggest journalist in the world. He had raised journalism to a highly respected profession. He showed the journalists, by his own example, that they are expected to be messengers of truth, goodwill and tolerance, and that their profession ought to be based upon ethics and morality. According to Gandhiji, a journalist should be a combination of industry, patience, fearlessness and impartiality. Everything should be written carefully after full investigation. He himself carefully selected and weighed the words that he used. He knew how to produce the maximum effect with the minimum of words, not forgetting clarity, simplicity and a pleasant manner of conveying his opinions, wishes or injunctions. His writings were free from exaggeration, bitterness or innuendoes. He was a master in the art of writing and he did not worship it for its own sake or for the name it might give him. Instead, he used this talent for the good of the people; for the service of *Daridranarayana* (the poor) and for the promotion of truth and non-violence. He had indeed made the pen more powerful than the sword. Those who had once developed a taste for reading *Young India*, *Navajivan*, *Harijan* or the *Harijansevak*, used to wait impatiently for their arrival and used to read every word of Bapu's articles. He made a special contribution to the Gujarati and the English languages. I am

confident that whatever has been penned by him will always inspire future generations of mankind!

189

September of 1939 is memorable for the commencement of the Second World War. I noticed then that Bapu was an ideal statesman. In my opinion, an ideal statesman is one who would admit the truth even in the opponent's case, and would give to the people, without compromising his own principles, a programme which would entail minimum sacrifice and produce maximum results. Gandhiji followed this policy during the war years, and abided by his principle of non-violence to the very end. Neither the prospect of freedom for the country nor fear of old comrades like Rajaji, Jawaharlalji, and Sardar Patel drifting away from him could influence him to deflect from his stand and promise military support to the Allies. He held fast to the position that India would render moral support to the side she felt justified in supporting, but would give no military help. Even from the practical point of view, I found that Bapu's diplomacy far surpassed that of the British. What mattered was the goodwill of India. If Britain had won this goodwill, then the opposition, which the Congress and Gandhiji had organized against recruitment and monetary contributions, would not have been offered and the unfavourable atmosphere would not have been created against Britain — as was done as a result of that vast ferment.

190

The other notable point in Bapu's policy was that, in spite of considering Britain as the greatest enemy of India's aspirations, he regarded the democratic and defensive approach of the Allies as being sound compared with the dictatorial and offensive actions of the Axis powers. Therefore, he desisted from exploiting the opportunity of harassing the British Power by starting immediately a country-wide Satyagraha movement. He regarded it cowardly to attack the opponent when he was in difficulty. To him non-violent chivalry was far nobler than violent bravery. He was, therefore, not prepared to surrender, or defer for any length of time, India's natural right of struggle for independence merely because of Britain's embarrassment. He advanced prudently, step by step. In order to test the sincerity of the British Government, he wanted the Allies to give proof that they were fighting to defend liberty. He made the demand that India should be granted interim freedom (or *de facto* freedom) during the period of war and complete freedom on its termination. The British Government failed in the test. As a first step, therefore, after giving the Government sufficient time and notice, Bapu withdrew the Congress Ministers who were holding offices in the provinces. When even this failed, he started what we know as individual Satyagraha. The principal plank in the move was that firstly, all the Satyagrahis were to march on foot to Delhi so that the Congress message could be delivered to the masses; secondly, the patriots would be able to come in contact with the maximum number of village people; thirdly, they would develop the traits of equality, humility and hardiness as compared to easy leadership tainted with conceit;

lastly, it would be impossible for the Government to make light of this tremendous movement.

191

This resulted in Mr. Stafford Cripps coming to India for a settlement. While it took other leaders some good thinking to understand Cripps and his Mission, Gandhiji, on meeting him at once recognized that it was a fake move. He called it 'a post-dated cheque on a bank that was under liquidation'. When he found that the British Power was bent upon exploiting our differences—Hindu-Muslim enmity—even in this hour of danger, in order to maintain their grip on India, he took up the position which spoke volumes for his boldness and courage. Just as he had declared at the time of the Round Table Conference that he was willing to hand over a blank cheque to the Muslims, so did he declare on this occasion that Britain could hand over power to any Indian agency, the Muslim League included. Neither were the British sincere, nor did the Allies have the courage to displease a powerful ally, nor was Mr. Jinnah willing to hold the reins of administration in his own hands. Bapu was, therefore, compelled to start what was known as the Quit India movement and to advise his countrymen to 'do or die'. What followed is a well-known historical fact. He left all the world a legacy, namely, that to win freedom from foreign yoke, or to seek justice, or to settle international disputes, there are means other than those of violence. Those means are economical, better and permanent. It is due to his creed of non-violence and Satyagraha that, in spite of one hundred and fifty years of relations as rulers and ruled, the British people and the Indians are now friends and not enemies.

192

During the years 1939 to 1942, I once again had the opportunity of living at Sevagram with Bapu. During those days, I was entrusted mainly with the work connected with the library, reading-room, correspondence and translation of the *Harijan*. Once when Rajkumari Amrit Kaur was going from Sevagram to Simla, I also had to leave for Delhi on that very day. I asked Bapu if I might accompany Rajkumaribehn. 'Do not accept anything for your fare from her," said Bapu. I was surprised and a little hurt too by this advice of Gandhiji's. Rather agitatedly I inquired, 'How does this enter the picture?' Bapu replied, "She is generous by nature and you are on good terms with her. Suppose you find it difficult to refuse. You will then be lowering yourself in her estimation. We are poor people. Self-respect is our wealth and we should take care of it. That is why I have cautioned you." Often, workers confound false prestige with self-respect and act impulsively. But Bapu considered it more harmful to expose oneself to unnecessary obligations.

193

A few days before this, a prominent politician had come to Ajmer-Merwara to preside over a public function. Some Congressmen who were his hosts saw him drink, and this caused them consternation. Mentioning this to Bapu, one day, when out on a walk, I asked him, 'Bapu, since you are so strict with even ordinary workers, how is it that you do not take any notice of the doings of important persons?' Bapu had the habit of commending a question if he liked it. Doing the same with regard to this question, he said, "... not only drinks, but is also

profligate. What can I do? For a long time now, this Western habit has influenced our thinking and actions so that our public life and private life are two different things. I have tried hard to wipe out this distinction, but I have to admit defeat since big and influential persons do not see eye to eye with me.... used to go out for a drive in a buggy in the evening with a bottle of wine and a prostitute and nobody dared raise his little finger at him. He was a powerful personality, and a leader of the people also. Leaving the past, let me refer to something which happened recently. I selected Vinoba as the first Satyagrahi. In order to introduce him, I included in the statement that he had never touched a woman. I had to scrape those words as... objected to their inclusion. I could not personally stand...'s objection. This is the state of our political life. It is good that the Congress has adopted prohibition as an item of its programme and, as a result, many people have given up drinking. But I have not been able to achieve much success in making the purity of private life a part of the national programme. I have, therefore, decided that I should be strict about my own workers and institutions and comparatively lenient about others." His strictness concerning his own life and laxity about others held him in good stead. It is also true that because of Bapu's influence, public life became purer, and public workers hesitated in advocating or indulging in questionable practices.

194

During those days, whenever there came a complaint or a dispute in connection with some worker or programme of work in Rajputana or Ajmer, Bapu often referred the matter to me. One day, a Congress office-

bearer came to him to show him the list of workers who wanted to be selected for the individual Satyagraha. It was necessary to get the lists approved by the Mahatma. This was also a means to come in direct contact with the workers in the country. Handing over the list to me, Bapu inquired, "Have you anything to say?" I replied, 'There are only three names in this list who qualify according to the conditions laid down by you.' "How?" he inquired. 'The rest of them,' I said, 'do not use Khadi for any purpose except for wearing while their relatives do not even wear it.' 'Is it compulsory to do so?' inquired the office-bearer. "Of course", replied Gandhiji. By imposing such restrictions Bapu took advantage of the worker's ideal of social service and sense of self-respect for popularizing Khadi and thus ensured that he got people of good calibre as workers rather than large numbers of bad workers.

195

One night, Dr. Sushila Nayyar woke me up at 10 o'clock, and said, 'Bapu wants you.' As I reached him, he handed me a telegram and inquired, "Do you know this man? What kind of a worker is he? Should I interfere in the matter?" The telegram was from Shrimati Narayanidevi, wife of Shri Manikyalal Varma, who was a prisoner of the Mewar Government and was ill. It had been requested that Bapu should help in this matter. I replied, 'Manikyalalji has been my colleague for years. He was the right-hand man and a lieutenant of Pathikji in Bijolia. He does not believe much in non-violence but is a true servant of the peasants. In my opinion, he deserves your help.' The next morning, Gandhiji sent a telegram to the Diwan, Sir T. Vijayaraghavacharya, stating that, in his opinion, Manikyalal

should be released. The same day he received a telegram from the acting Diwan, Shri Prabhas Chandra Chatterji, saying that Bapu's telegram had been redirected to Sir Vijayaraghavacharya who was on leave at Madras. Manikyalal was released in a week's time. Thus, we see that the Mahatma was always ready to help sincere workers even if they were personally unknown to him.

196

A well-known worker of Kathiawad had returned from Japan. He had retired from public life for personal reasons and had gone abroad. He had written a book on some aspects of agriculture in Japan, a copy of which he wanted to present to Bapu. He also wanted to see Gandhiji but hesitated. Being well known to me, he sought my advice. I said, 'If you want to return to public life, either do not consult him at all or if you consult him, act on his advice.' 'Suppose he himself touches on the subject and offers advice?' he asked. I replied, 'If I have understood Bapu correctly, he would neither touch upon the subject by himself nor offer advice. You just meet him, talk to him about Japan and come back. He will inquire after your health and will confine himself only to this.' My reading of the situation proved accurate. Bapu used to say, "I am nobody's judge." And he always acted on this.

197

Gandhiji was a regular reader of the *Bombay Chronicle* and the *Times of India*. He read the former as advocating the national point of view and the latter to keep himself abreast of the opposite view. Both papers were widely read in Gujarat and Kathiawad — Bapu's main centres of activity. On reaching Sevagram, he began to

glance through the *Nagpur Times* also. Among the weeklies, he read the leading article of Shri Natarajan's *Indian Social Reformer* and among the monthlies, the main article and comments of Babu Ramanand's *Modern Review*. But, in all, he did not devote more than half an hour of his time to reading newspapers. He read them lying down when he stretched himself out after the midday meal. He glanced through the head lines and, if there was an important news item or statement, he would read it. This induced sleep. But he received heaps of papers, books and journals from different parts of the world. It was my duty to present him with cuttings of interest from these. He read them in his 'library' (latrine). He had such a penetrating insight that in case some important cutting was omitted, he would at once remind me of it.

198

One day, a news item appeared to the effect that several deaths had occurred by people drinking water from a well in an area of the Nizam's territory of Hyderabad, Deccan. The implied suggestion was that the area was regarded hostile, and that the people suspected that the State authorities had a hand in what they thought to be foul play. I placed this news item before Bapu rather apprehensively. When I confessed my fear he said, "Do let me know about such things as they are important. In politics, based on violence and untruth, everything is possible. We cannot shut our eyes to such happenings. If we do not dare take up such matters, who else will do so? We must, of course, take care not to be unjust to anyone by publishing anything without properly investigating the truth." To the best of my recollection, Bapu wrote to the Hyderabad Government about the

matter and also published something in the *Harijan* in connection with it.

199

A certain worker of the Ashram had written to his superior authority about . . . 's character. The complaint was that the authority did investigate but he did so in the absence of the complainant and pronounced judgement. He was dissatisfied, and conveyed his feelings to Bapu who mentioned this to me at the time of the daily walk. I hesitated to say anything. Then Bapu said, "I understand your hesitancy. I should not have asked you, but my difficulty is that if I mention this to Kishorlal, then he would be shocked at such happenings. Jamnalalji was the right person but he is no more; so is Mahadev. I do not have time to investigate the case myself." I had, perforce, to say what I knew. On hearing it, Gandhiji's face was filled with sorrow and, heaving a sigh, he said, "Such lapses have occurred so often, involving sometimes important men, that at times I feel sorely disappointed. I have begun to wonder if I find my big experiment, extending over a long time, failing me, I should save energy and divert it for combating violence. I fear that in case I reveal these thoughts, our own institutions may become hypocritical. In this case there appears to be much hypocrisy. I consider this trait most dangerous because a hypocrite is highly resistant to reform. After this conversation took place, a worker ... of the Ashram brought to me a file of papers concerning the moral character of . . . This contained allegations of his father as well as letters from some of the women workers. But I did not encourage the gentleman as I remembered the conversation I had with Bapu.

200

I suspected that I was suffering from diabetes. When Bapu heard of it he restricted my diet. Rice and too-sweet fruit were banned. Pyarelalji, Gandhiji's secretary, suggested dry fruit, which I began taking.... discovered luxury in this. She made a hurting observation. When somebody brought this to the notice of Bapu, he said to me, "...'s motives are pure. She has great love of service. She is devotedly looking after my comfort. She takes no heed of her own physical welfare. Even though she hails from a well-to-do family, she eats, dresses and lives like poor folk. But she has an acid tongue. She does not spare even me, let alone others. So do not be offended. Take it easy." All my irritation evaporated. He must have said something to her also because after that she did not say anything offensive to me.

201

"...is the bull of the Ashram", said Bapu one day as he set out on his morning walk. The reason was that Shri...was having an argument with somebody and was thundering away at him. I said, 'Shri...does not enforce upon himself the same rigidness of discipline as he does in enforcing his own discipline upon others. He removes books and newspapers from the library not only without permission but even on being forbidden to do so.' "Yes, he has this weakness, but his chief one is his short temper. When he loses control of himself, he does not even spare me. But as against these shortcomings, he has many noble traits. He is very industrious. He is a confirmed celibate, very determined, quite fearless and courageous. When he renders service to anyone,

he forgets himself. For thrift few can equal him," observed Bapu. He saw more good than evil in others, appreciated their good points and employed them in the service of mankind.

202

Gandhiji had massage every day. But he made double use of his time. One day, he called me for an urgent errand at the time he was having the massage. I saw that he was reading some important papers. Sometimes he used to be asleep at the time of massage. He was so habituated to taking a nap that, while on the Harijan tour in the South, he could doze off even when travelling in a motor car. Whenever he wished, and under any conditions, he could take a "cat-nap", waking up alert and refreshed.

203

Bapu was always very alert when talking to Pressmen. He insisted that his interviews should only be published after he had seen, and approved the text. If an incorrect version was reported, perchance he would invariably point it out to the correspondent. If he failed to admit his mistake and remedy it, Gandhiji would not grant him further interviews. Some foreign newspapers used to send him money by cable for obtaining his views on important current topics. He had attained so great a mastery in drafting those press telegrams that not a spuerfluous word could be found in them. Wherever he went, he kept himself informed about the clearance hours of mail, so that everything could be despatched at the right time. He sent articles for *Young India* and *Harijan* in time even while on a journey. He had

also full information about train times and kept to them. He remembered very well which train would connect which and where. When I returned to Ajmer from Madras from the Harijan tour, he explained to me all the connections right up to my destination, and this surprised me very much. I did not have to make enquiries *en route*.

204

Bapu was discoursing, in answer to a question by me, on a spiritual subject. I was uttering the courtesy word *ji* (equivalent to yes, sir) at the end of each sentence that he uttered. A while later, I must have lost track of what he was saying, or I must not have understood something he said; so I became silent, and Gandhiji ceased talking. Then, "What has happened?" he inquired, "If there is a doubt in your mind, or if you have not followed anything I have said so far, do not keep quiet. Ask me. The Gita has revealed three steps for seeking knowledge, viz., humility, inquisitiveness and service. One must not hesitate to ask questions, and, as long as one is not satisfied with the answer, the questioning should continue. Keeping silent is also a kind of untruth. One should listen attentively; otherwise, it reveals bad manners." Bapu imparted knowledge with great patience. At the same time he emphasized concentration on the part of the listener.

205

Bapu was meticulous about grammar, which he considered indispensable for the correct use and scientific knowledge of a language. Pleased at my translation for the *Harijan*, he gave me the nickname of 'Bhashashastri'

(doctor of language) and said, "When I talk in Hindi at the time of the walk, correct my errors then and there." Before this, he had asked me to go through his original Hindi articles and comments, and to correct, where necessary, the errors in language. This I had agreed to carry out but the new command was embarrassing. To correct such a great man in the presence of other important persons did not appeal to me. But Bapu was a man of his own ways. He was completely free from false notions of prestige. He said, "Where it is a question of knowledge, even a child can be the teacher. This will easily improve my language and I shall not have to devote extra time to it." So, reluctantly but sparingly, I began to perform the duty. One day he used the expression *main ne bola*, I said, 'It should be *main bola*.' Bapu said, "Why? If there is any rule, let me know." I had a liking for grammar but had long since forgotten the rules. It took me some time to give a satisfactory reply but I succeeded in producing one. 'The subject takes the suffix *ne* in simple past tense in the case of the transitive verb only and not in the case of an intransitive verb,' I replied. Bapu was pleased. After that, whenever I corrected him, I first made a mental search for the rule, or made up one on the spot.

206

In this connection I am reminded of an incident, revealing Rajendrababu's child-like simplicity and his eagerness to acquire knowledge, brought to my notice by the Maharawal of Doongarpur. It was this. A Negotiating Committee was appointed, after winning Independence, to come to terms with the ruling princes. Pandit Nehru, Sardar Patel, Maulana Azad and Dr. Rajendraprasad represented the Congress while the

Maharawal of Doongarpur was one of those representing the princes. He sat next to Dr. Rajendraprasad. He gave a one-sentence description of all the four leaders, thus: "Nehruji is a truthful man. He would say something one day and say something else the next day unhesitatingly to correct himself. Maulana is a magnificent person. When the princes emphasized their difficulties, he said, 'Your Highnesses, kindly consider our difficulties also. What will our socialist friends think about us?' The Sardar is a strong man, who always does what he says. Rajendrababu has a kindly nature. Repeatedly he asked me, 'Maharaja Sahib, what is the meaning of this?' I felt embarrassed. I said, 'I am a child before you. How can I explain it to you?' He said, 'No, no. There is no harm in this. What I do not know, I ask you to explain to me. Please tell me about it if you know.'"

207

The President of the All-India Vaidya Sammelan, Dr. Lakshmipati, came to see Bapu in 1940 or 1941. He thought that Gandhiji was misinformed about the Ayurvedic system of treatment. In order to remove this 'misunderstanding' he stayed in the Ashram for a few days. He discussed different aspects of the subject with Bapu at the time of the morning and evening walks. The Mahatma acknowledged that though Ayurvedic treatment was akin to Nature's method of curing, cheaper and indigenous, yet, from the point of view of science, its progress had been retarded and it cannot match allopathy specially in surgery. Dr. Lakshmipati claimed that as far as the treatment of diseases was concerned, the Ayurvedic system excelled, in most cases,

any other system. Some of its medicines were so efficacious that no other system was its equal in this respect. Due to lack of State support and encouragement its progress had come to a halt. Even now, however, it could be revived if money could be provided. Bapu said, "I shall give you a few patients. Cure them. If you need facilities for research work, I could give you a place at Sevagram and may also be able to arrange for the necessary money. Prove your worth, and I shall change my views." A proposal to open a research centre was mooted, but it did not materialize. Gandhiji had an open mind and was always ready to change his views with experiment and experience.

208

Bapu was very strict in matters of cleanliness. Whilst talking of ideal conditions of cleanliness, he often mentioned the latrine and the kitchen in the same breath, saying that there should not be a single fly in either of the places. But to achieve this he preferred scrupulously clean conditions to the use of phenyl, fixing of wire gauzes and other measures which were expensive. He always bore in mind the interest of the poor and the low purchasing power of our poverty-stricken countrymen. For the prevention of infectious diseases, he considered the hygiene of the toilet room and the kitchen indispensable. Such cleanliness was actually practised in his institutions. But as in other spheres, here too he emphasized self-help through economy and hard work, rather than the abundance of means.

209

The Viceroy had sent for Gandhiji for a talk before he commenced the individual Satyagraha campaign during war time. He wanted to meet Bapu as soon as possible either at Simla or Delhi. The suggestion was that the Mahatma should take an aeroplane or a special train. Bapu rejected both the proposals and travelled by an ordinary scheduled train. He expressed his feelings as follows:

> I did not want a telephone but Ghanshyamdas (Birla) has provided one here. I did not want a road from Wardha to Sevagram but the Government of the Central Provinces has constructed one. I do not need a car but Jamnalalji insists on one being placed at my disposal. When facilities are given out of regard for me, I have to reciprocate by graciously accepting them. But I can on no account accept an aeroplane or a special train for myself. Eventually, the brunt of the expense has to be borne by our poor people. If I reach a day later, it does not matter as no serious harm would be done. The tide of time will keep to its own speed; nobody can quicken it. No good has ever been achieved by accelerating its pace. Why should I then go in for speed to save a few hours?

210

Gandhiji was the guest of the son-in-law of Dr. Ansari at Delhi. I took a young relative of mine, who was under socialist influence, to see Bapu. He said, 'Birla runs mills and earns millions of rupees by exploiting the workers. But he gives you a lakh or half a lakh during the year and puts on Khadi. Is this not hypocrisy?' "Why should we look at it like that?" answered Bapu. "One deserves credit for whatever good one does. Other capitalists do not even do this much.

He is better at least than those. And he has a good moral conduct and observes self-restraint." Thus, Bapu appreciated good qualities in anybody, and won many supporters for his mission.

211

Deenabandhu Andrews and Bapu were close friends. They called each other by their pet names Charlie and Mohan. Once, when Shri Andrews came to Sevagram, he wore a long *kurta* with the upper button open, and a *dhoti* with a wide black border. As I saw him alight from the car, I was surprised and I informed Bapu that Deenabandhu was dressed in a *sari*! Presently, C. F. Andrews arrived. Gandhiji immediately asked him, "Charlie, why this make-up today?" 'Why, what has happened?' queried his friend, bewildered. "Ramnarayan," said Bapu, "says that such *dhotis* are worn by women." Deenabandhu gave an equally saucy reply, 'Because I was coming to my Mohan.' It was a rare sight to see these two elderly personages indulge in such witticism ! Bapu was right when he said that if he had no sense of humour, he would not have survived those turbulent times, or might have gone mad.

212

On Gandhiji's birthday in 1940, teachers and students from the Wardha Mahila Ashram had come to offer their greetings and pray for his long life. Bapu had, perhaps, returned unsuccessful from his talks with Mr. Jinnah at Bombay only a few days previous to this. Addressing the girls he drew the picture of the increasing forces of violence, and referred to the many problems facing our country. He said, "I have unshakable faith in the power of non-violence. I am confident that some day or the

other, Satyagraha will melt the heart of Englishmen also. It will no doubt influence the princes. But Shri Jinnah is an embodiment of violence. I do not see any hope of changing his heart." For once, these statements of Bapu's shook me but later developments proved how correct was his judgement of human nature!

213

...'s engagement to ... was arranged. She had come to the Sevagram Ashram during her college vacation. When her fiance's letter came, somebody intercepted it. She lodged a complaint with Bapu. Such happenings upset him very much. He suspected a woman Ashramite, one of his closest associates, and even disclosed his suspicion to her. But, as the suspicion was groundless, it pained her deeply. Bapu also felt sorry for speaking about it, and, at the prayer meeting, he said, "The interception of ...'s letter is a serious matter. I should go on a fast for it. But I too have made a mistake in suspecting.... I express my regrets to her. At the same time, I warn everyone that if such a thing is repeated, I shall have to take drastic action. But, we should not act as spies. It behoves us to depend upon a man's goodness. By keeping watch on the actions of another, we presume him, or her, to be guilty. This makes us guilty of wrong-doing and reacts adversely." Gandhiji was the essence of humility, and believed in admitting his faults publicly and making amends for them.

214

...became so enamoured of...'s heroic qualities that she determined to marry him. When the proposal was placed before Bapu, he was grieved to know that a lady of her age, possessing qualities of sacrifice and hard

living, should now lose hold upon herself. He did not approve at all of the idea. She felt pained at his disapproval and gave up eating and drinking and began to cry. I used to teach her Hindi. Seeing her in this pitiable condition I was moved to pity. When I questioned her, she told me everything, even her past. I feared lest I was overstepping my limits, but, impulsively, I placed the matter before Bapu. He said, "You have done well to tell me everything. I do not consider it true love...is in a swoon because of morbidity. She does not know that the other party is not even willing. It will blow over. Nobody should talk to her nor should you go there to give her lessons." He did not yield in such matters even to his closest followers, and dealt strictly in order to correct them.

215

Once, Shrimati Rameshwari Nehru came to meet the Mahatma at Sevagram. When I met her at breakfast, she said, 'Harijan work in Rajasthan is tottering. I want you to take it up again and infuse new life and vigour into it. If you have a preference for Delhi, you can come there.' I replied, 'I am at Bapu's disposal. I shall abide by his instructions.' She talked to him about it. Bapu rejected the proposal saying, "For the present, Ramnarayan ought to work with me." Bapu was against changing places frequently and called it dependence. He would not yield unless it was necessary, or inevitable, to do so.

216

Once, he was about to set out on a journey. Dr. Sushila Nayyar used to accompany him in those days. This time, Bapu told her to stay at Sevagram. She was very disappointed; she insisted on going and even said that if she did not accompany him, it was no use her staying on at the Ashram. Bapu saw only a feeling of attachment to him in her insistence, and he never supported such tendencies in anyone. Dr. Sushila took it deeply to heart, but Bapu kept firmly to his resolution and did not yield to what he considered unreasonable or harmful.

217

One day, I went to talk to him about something important. I commenced the talk at the close of the meal and when we got up, I hesitated and kept behind him. But Bapu economized on every minute in order to be useful to others. He said, "Do not lag behind. I can talk a little on the way, and the rest in the hutment while washing my hands and rinsing my mouth." When I reached it I saw that there was only a small *lota* which must have contained about a tumblerful of water. He managed both the things well with this small quantity of water. I saw him frequently perform these duties ever in the midst of other people, sitting around him, but never did a drop of water splash about. He performed even such minor things with so much care, deligence and neatness.

218

Shri Jainarayan Vyas of Rajasthan was then the Chairman of the Jodhpur Municipal Committee. Colonel Field was the Chief Minister of the State; or in fact, was everything. The British Political Officers were hostile to nationalist workers, especially the States' people's workers. That he should be obstructive with a worker like Vyasji was no matter of surprise. But Vyasji was not a man to be easily dislodged. But when the limit was reached, he felt the need of consulting Bapu, whom he did not know personally; so, he wrote to me to arrange for an interview. Bapu was always willing to help sincere workers, and therefore, agreed to see him. Vyasji came to Sevagram, stayed there for a day or two, consulted him and went back. He wanted to present the Mahatma with something before he left, and composed a poem which he sent through me to him. On reading it, Bapu said, "The composition is good but it is not going to help in eradicating poverty. If Jainarayanji had presented me with a hank of hand-spun yarn, that would have been better." Gandhiji did not dislike poetry. But he was not in favour of the wave of enthusiasm for poetry that had swept over many people in preference to more constructive work. He was an admirer of the poets-laureate like Shakespeare and Tagore. He was almost a devotee of the devotional poets like Tulsidas and others. But he expected people to give time to more solid work, in view of the poverty of our country, than to poetry.

219

Ba had taken ill. She lived in a separate hut in Sevagram. Bapu visited her mornings and evenings regularly. One evening, he could not go because of pressure of work. The next morning, after his bath,

he called on her; I was with him. "How are you?" inquired Bapu. Ba replied, 'What is it to you? You are a big man, a Mahatma. You have to care for the whole world. How can you think of me?' Running his fingers through her hair, Bapu said, "Am I a Mahatma and big man for you also?" Ba's grievance vanished. I shall never forget these remarks, exchanged between this most exemplary elderly couple!

220

Cleaning of teeth with *datan* was compulsory. One had to go through it before the morning prayer meeting. The *datan* was distributed the previous evening to everyone at meal time. After use, the inmates split them to scrape their tongues clean and thus free them of the coating. Then, they threw them away. Flies gathered on these discarded *datans* and spread germs. The twigs were thrown away as rubbish. Bapu directed, as a solution, that they should be washed and collected in a basket and, when dried, they should be used as fuel. Thus cleanliness was assured and the waste cleverly utilized. He insisted on waste paper also being burned as it could not be converted into manure. He insisted that in case one was obliged to ease himself at a place other than the proper latrine, he should cover the excreta with earth so that odour and disease might not spread. The same applied to spitting.

221

I was on good terms with the Praja Mandal of Alwar State for a long time. Its workers consulted me. When I migrated from Ajmer to Sevagram, they asked for Bapu's guidance and help through me. When

once I was discussing this matter with him, Shrimati Vijayalakshmi Pandit came in by chance. Seeing her, he said, "Behold, she has come. You are lucky. I was wondering whom to send to Alwar. I feel hesitant to depute Rajkumari who already does too much." Then he explained to Shrimati Pandit the problems of Alwar which she grasped immediately and the difficulty was solved in no time. One Col. Harvey was, at this time, the Administrative Officer there. It was natural that he might be influenced by a lady, and that too from the illustrious Nehru family! Bapu was a pastmaster in understanding men and their nature, and in making proper use of them, their talents and foibles included.

222

Sardar Vallabhbhai was displeased at the conduct of a prominent worker of the States' People's Organization, particularly with regard to financial matters. He was then at Sevagram to recoup his health under Gandhiji's care. During his morning walk, Bapu called me close to him and said, "Do you know... ? Have you also had anything to do with him?" 'Yes, Bapu,' replied I. 'I have known him for some years now as we are colleagues.' "From now onwards have nothing to do with him" commanded Bapu. I was startled, and asked, 'You mean even my personal relations?' "Public workers have only one relationship," said Bapu, "hence, my suggestion." I kept quiet. Then he again said, "Have a talk with the Sardar about him and he will tell you everything." On our return from the walk, we went to Shri Patel's quarters. Mahadevbhai was also there. Both of them told me many things about.... The substance was, '...is

an undesirable person as he selfishly exploits all his contacts. His entire group is like that. We should keep at a safe distance from him.' I bowed to the Mahatma's advice out of regard for him, but in my heart of hearts I was not yet quite convinced. After the attainment of freedom, the friends of...revealed everything to me. It was only then that I realized that Bapu was absolutely right in advising me to keep away from him.

223

During the war period, I realized that one great value in Bapu's policy of non-violence and in his approach was that it made men fearless, and produced a telling effect upon the opponent also. On being defeated by Germany, during the last war, a well armed country like France had to accept very humiliating terms that shocked other nations. And, eventually, even powerful countries, like Germany, Japan and Italy, had to subordinate themselves to the Allies. On the other hand, unarmed India stood fearlessly before victorious England, continued to oppose her rule and finally compelled her to concede us independence.

224

Two Satyagrahas had been launched in Hyderabad State during war time. One was conducted by the Arya Samaj and the other by the State Congress. The latter was guided by Bapu. Two leaders of the Arya Samaj Satyagraha, Shri Ghanshyamdas Gupta and Shri Deshbandhu Gupta, were also followers of Gandhiji, being Congressmen. They came to consult Bapu from time to time, and he unstintedly gave them advice. When it was felt that on account of both the Satyagrahas running simultaneously, a misunderstanding was being created,

and the State was likely to exploit the situation to weaken the Satyagraha campaign, Bapu, instead of asking the Arya Samaj leaders to withdraw their movement, withdrew his own. Thus, in all worthwhile work, Bapu not only gave help to individuals but also to institutions without any bias, and gave them credit at the expense of his own followers when necessary.

225

The aged Ruler of Aundh was national and religious-minded. He decided, in consultation with Bapu, to hand over power to his people. The British Resident wanted to thwart the plan. Rajasaheb was firm, being a man of character. He went immediately to see Gandhiji. When the Resident came to know of this, he set out in his car to chase him, but in vain. Rajasaheb and the Yuvaraj reached Sevagram without incident. Bapu said, "Keep firmly to your excellent resolve. I am with you. In spite of this, if they harm you, we shall mend matters on coming into power." A few days later, Mahatmaji met the Viceroy. Among other things, he mentioned Aundh and hinted at some steps being taken against the Ruler. Bapu said, "If such a noble-spirited Raja and such a noble deed can be subjected to harm, then I shall consider this action as directly opposed to me." Accordingly, the Viceroy, who wanted to solve many problems with the support of Gandhiji, did not wish to come into conflict with him on a small matter like this, in spite of the insistence of the Resident and the Rajasaheb was left completely untouched. In this manner, Bapu always went to the farthest length in supporting good acts and deeds.

226

The Yuvaraj of Aundh came to stay at the Ashram for some time. As chance would have it, he began to suffer from dysentery. I was deputed to clean his commode. When the Mahatma heard of this, he remarked, "It is good. You have opposed the princes; now you are expiating for it." I enjoyed the jest, but benign Bapu feared that I might have been hurt; so, he added, "Take this also as part of the service you are rendering to the States. He is a noble prince. When one is sick, even if he is not noble, we should serve him with the same fervour." Bapu differentiated between an evildoer and the evil act. He consistently believed in condemning the evil but serving the wrong-doer.

227

After the dissolution of the Rajasthan Seva Sangh, Pathikji's relations with Gandhiji could not be maintained. After reaching Sevagram, I acted on the policy that a large number of new workers in Rajasthan should receive guidance from Bapu and that old workers should re-establish their contacts. Gandhiji encouraged me in my endeavours. Pathikji also felt the urge to renew his contacts with Bapu but he hesitated to write to him direct. The reason was that a few years ago he had himself expressed a desire to meet Bapu but could not come. At that time, the Mahatma had written to Pathikji in Hindi of which English translation is as follows:

Dear Pathikji,

I received your letter today. I had sent a reply to your last letter. I am surprised that it did not reach you. My regard for you has undergone no change. If it had, I could not conceal the

fact. You can come this way whenever it suits your convenience. I shall be touring about for ten days, in the beginning of October, at a one-day distance from Madras, where you can find out my whereabouts.

I have not written anything to the Government for the commutation of the death sentence passed on Abdul Rashid. I have only advised the Hindus to forgive him. What do you expect of me in connection with the prisoners of the Kakori case? Which public should I address?

Yours sincerely,
Mohandas

This letter shows that Bapu tried to acknowledge letters from workers promptly. It also shows — in its Hindi version — the knowledge of Hindi Bapu had in those days, and how much influence the Gujarati type of sentence construction had upon him and to what extent it improved in later years.

So, Pathikji wrote to me that he wanted to meet Gandhiji and, if possible, work under him. When I told Bapu of Pathikji's hesitancy and his desire, Bapu smiled and said, "Such a well-known person should feel no hesitation. Write to him that he can come anytime he likes. Of course, he will have to do manual work like everybody else; he should be willing to receive training in some constructive work and devote himself to it like you." Where Bapu was willing to accept even such workers who differed from him in their views, he tried to make even the biggest of them humble and selfless in rendering service to their country and its people.

228

When Hitler was at the zenith of his power, his admirers all over the world hailed him as god, while those who disagreed with him condemned him as a devil. One day, at the time of his evening walk, I asked Gandhiji, 'Bapu, what is your opinion of Hitler?' He replied: "I regard him as a great man. Even his opponents admit that he is above vice; he neither smokes nor drinks. He is a bachelor too. He does not own property. He is occupied day and night in his country's service. It is no mean task to raise a country sky-high in so short a time, He knows how to conquer and then be generous. Had he so desired, he could have called the aged Marshal Petain of France to Germany but instead, he himself went to the other's country and made him agree to certain conditions and accorded him treatment which can be considered, judging from Nazi standards, exceptionally lenient. Still, we must not forget that we can never adopt his views or methods." The opinion which Gandhiji expressed publicly with regard to Hitler, the open letter that he addressed to the British nation, and the appeal that he directed to the Japanere people will always remain a monument to his unparalleled courage, goodwill and idealism in the annals of history.

229

I was living at Gopuri (Wardha), while carrying on the work of Goseva Sangh. My family was living at the Sevagram Ashram. As arranged by Bapu, I used to reach Sevagram on the morning of Sunday and return on Monday. The object was that he should

receive a report of the week's activities of the Goseva Sangh, and Jamnalalji should know Bapu's reactions to them. So, I used to time my departure from Gopuri in such a manner that I might meet Bapu at the end of his walk. As soon as he saw me, he used to remark cheerfully, "You have come!" and then commence the talk. One day, Mahadevbhai told me, 'As soon as Bapu sees you coming, or sitting on the culvert and waiting for him, he tries to wind up the conversation saying, "Ramnarayan has come from such a distance. I shall have to talk to him now."' I learnt that when Shri Valunjkar also came from Nalwadi, before I went to Gopuri, to report about the tannery, Bapu, suspending all conversation, used to listen to him first of all.

230

Against my own conviction, and in ıesponse to the pressure from my family, I had my life insured in 1938. After reaching Sevagram, I wanted to rectify the error, but Anjanadevi was opposed to it. It was then decided that we should consult Gandhiji and abide by his advice. I believed that, Bapu being opposed to insurance on principle, the decision would be in my favour. But it was the other way round! After the evening prayer when we were called into his presence, he asked me. "In whose favour have you assigned it?" 'In Anjanadevi's,' I answered. "Then ask her if she is prepared to forego it." Anjanadevi declined to surrender it. Then Bapu said, "I consider insurance unnecessary from the point of view of faith in God, and unwise from the point of view of business. Therefore it is undesirable. But from that of pure justice, Anjanadevi is entitled to it. Since she does not want to relinquish it, you will have to keep it for honouring your word." Bapu was

very thrifty about money matters, and hence I hesitated to draw from the Ashram funds for my insurance. Still, for the sake of justice and for honouring a pledge, he even permitted exceptions of this sort.

231

Once, at Gopuri, a young man with long hair and a heavy beard arrived. He appeared to be somewhat mentally unbalanced. He said, 'Give me work. I had been to Sevagram but I did not succeed in getting anything.' I felt sorry for him, and expressed my desire, to be helpful to him, to Shri Radhakrishna Bajaj who was then the Secretary of the Sangh. He agreed, though it was an experiment I wished to try. But, as the young man had been rejected at Sevagram, I thought I should first consult Bapu about it. I was due at Sevagram the very next day on my weekly visit. When I brought up the matter, Bapu replied, "Yes, that man came here, but nobody dared engage him. If you are bold enough to make the experiment, then, by all means, do so! A man, if he is not lazy, cannot be said to be dear for mere board and lodging. Besides, he knows farming as well as animal husbandry. See what you can do with him. It will be a test of your skill and patience." That young man was no other than the present well-known worker of the Sevagram Ashram, Shri Anantram, who is much praised by both Shri Balwantsingh and Radhakrishna. Bapu encouraged his followers to make experiments of this sort. Several who became his valuable lieutenants, were products of such experiments.

232

Jamnalalji had been incarcerated at Nagpur, and, in the press reports appeared that the Government was not treating him properly and was not giving him the necessary medical facilities. On the basis of these reports, I wrote a comment in the *Navajyoti*. When Gandhiji came to know of it, he took objection to my comments, and said, "The facts are just the reverse. The treatment is good and beyond expectation." I had to amend my comment and express regrets to the Madhya Pradesh Government. I had to undertake not to write on political subjects as long as I remained in the Ashram. Only then was Bapu satisfied. I saw him angry for the first and last time on this occasion. Bapu was as liberal in commending good deeds even of his opponents, as he was strict with regard to truthfulness.

233

On release from jail, Jamnalalji, in consultation with Bapu, made cow service the mission of his life. With the object of doing it on Gandhian lines, an All-India organization, *Go-seva Sangh*, was inaugurated at Wardha on the *Dassera* day, 1941 under the chairmanship of Jamnalalji. Though I liked the work, I had not yet decided upon my future programme, since my vow to devote myself to the service of the States stood in the way of making any definite promise. So, I consulted Bapu who said, "Firstly, the problem of the States is not a problem at all. Neither the Congress nor the British Government want them. As the States themselves are ultimately going to be dissolved, where is the problem?" This, indeed, was new to me and I felt as if a load had been removed from my head. But

I had yet to understand the significance of Goseva, which Bapu explained thus:

India is predominantly an agricultural country. Farming depends upon the quality of cattle. Therefore, Goseva is even more important than farming. Under the circumstances, I consider the growth and development of Goseva vital — even more so than our struggle for freedom, because our people already yearn for freedom but not so with regard to Goseva. We have to create a desire in them to improve cattle breeding. That will be the most improtant item of work in free India. I have, therefore, given it priority over every other form of constructive work. In my opinion, it is the cow that gives us bullocks which are the backbone of our main national industry — agriculture, and it is the cow which furnishes us, in the form of milk and ghee, those nutrients which are indispensable for a nation which feeds itself mainly on vegetarian diet. I have my own ideas about Goseva and a special scheme has already been put into operation provisionally. An All-India organization has come into being under the guidance of a constructive worker and organizer of the calibre of Jamnalalji. Now, we need able workers. If you also devote yourself to it, I shall be glad.

I was pleased, and I began to work in the Goseva Sangh. Subsequently, Gandhiji impressed upon my mind and heart the nobleness and the need of this mission.

234

Jamnalalji passed away on the 11th of February, 1942. The very next day, Bapu called me after breakfast, and said, "Jamnalalji has gone but the mission he served must live. He was pleased with your work and said that sooner or later you would be his principal helper. He leaves behind three successors: Janakidevi will take over his office; Kamalnayan will take

charge of his property and Radhakrishna of his mission. In my opinion there is nobody who can carry it on; at least there is none now. It is my desire that you should become its Secretary." I replied, 'Bapu, the work is noble; it is after my own heart, and I have some experience also of the duties of a Secretary. Janakibehn is elderly and I shall have no difficulty in working under her chairmanship. She will be helpful and there is no question of any difficulty as far as she is concerned. But there will be two other problems: one is that even though Ghanshyamdasji will be the vice-Chairman, he will be the *de facto* Chairman, and it will be difficult for me to get on with him. The second one is that Jamnalalji had desired, and I had agreed, that I should go to Bangalore to receive training in Goseva work for six months. Such training will not only be useful in gaining knowledge but will also redeem an undertaking. I now leave everything in your hands.' Bapu replied, "You will have no difficulty at the hands of Ghanshyamdasji, I am sure, as I notice a great change in him. Besides, I shall also be there to keep an eye on things. If a difficult situation arises, I shall attend to it. Of course, it is a different matter regarding training. Gaining of knowledge is both necessary and useful, but in the present context it is of secondary importance. The running of the institution is really more important. But the main factor is the redeeming of a word of honour. So, you go to Bangalore. But tell me, who, you think, will be suitable for the Secretaryship?" 'Swami Anand,' I unhesitatingly replied. "Yes, he will suit, if he agrees to it," said Gandhiji. Eventually, he shouldered the responsibility. It will thus be observed that Bapu always gave preference to moral considerations over expediency.

235

Bapu gave me a letter of introduction to Shri Jal Rustomji Kothawala, the Parsee Director of the Imperial Dairy Institute, Bangalore. Bapu had seen this institute and there he (Gandhiji) was regarded as the only Indian leader interested in the improvement and care of our cattle. As I reached the institution, even the professors were eager to have a look at 'Gandhiji's disciple'! I became acquainted with everybody in a day or two. The students surpassed all others in showering me with kindness. Their warmth and regard for me overwhelmed me! When I joined the institute there were about twenty or twenty-five students in the hostel. They had four or five separate kitchens. The students did no manual work. Their rooms were cleaned, and their shoes polished by the servants. Most of them went to see a cinema show every week, while some went every second or third day. Liquor was freely consumed and quite a few of them were irresponsible and too fond of pleasure. Bapu had given me a piece of advice before I left Sevagram. He said, "Bring from there what is worth bringing, and give them what is worth giving." I began my work as soon as I reached there and improvement followed in a natural way. All the kitchens we merged into one but arrangements were made for cooking meat separately. All sat together but meat was served only to those who ate it. They began sweeping their rooms and polishing their own shoes. Some even washed their clothes. Liquor was banned in the hostel and going to the cinema was curtailed to once a month. I had to make my own contribution to this in so far as I had to

accompany them. Of course, the choice of film was left to me. Some students began to wear Khadi, and physical exercise or out-door games became compulsory. Disposal of excreta was now carried out as in the Ashram, and students began to clean their dishes themselves. It was made compulsory for them to be back in the hostel not later than 10 p.m. All these improvements were put through without any pressure or coercion from me or the institute authorities. I attribute it to the good influence of Bapu's teachings, of which I was but a humble instrument. All this was unprecedented in the history of the Dairy Institute. The students and some of the professors called me *Bhaiji*. Even now, when they meet me, they address me in the same affectionate manner!

236

One Mr. Cox, a retired military officer, was the Superintendent of the Dairy Institute at Bangalore. On account of my being Bapu's man, even he treated me well. So did his wife. Sometimes she would invite me to a breakfast. One day she said to me, 'You are Mr. Gandhi's disciple, and you do not consider the English people your enemies. The Director of the Institute, Mr. Kothawala, often tells my husband that his British superiors had deprived him of his rights. Except for this grouse, he has no personal complaint against my husband. How could one blame A for the fault of B? Could you,' asked Mrs. Cox, with tears in her eyes, 'reason this out with Mr. Kothawala in order to help us?' I replied: 'Mr. Kothawala and Mr. Cox are both my teachers and therefore my superiors. To advise one or the other

will amount to taking too much upon myself. And if Bapu comes to know of it, he may disapprove of my action. Nevertheless, if Mr. Kothawala opens the subject, I shall gladly do what I can to be of assistance to you.' Before long, a chance offered itself. The reason was that because of Bapu's influence, Mr. Kothawala treated me with greater regard than Mr. Cox. He was a vigilant administrator, and was aware of my activities as well as of my intimacy with the Cox family. At times, he invited me to discuss matters connected with the hostel. He called me the day after my meeting with the Cox family. After touching on many subjects, he movingly told me the pathetic story of the shabby treatment accorded him by the British officers. He mentioned Mr. Cox also *inter alia*. Seizing the opportunity, I said, 'Your British superiors harassed you; but if you treat your British subordinates with generosity, and Bapu comes to know of this, you will rise high in his estimation.' He had such high regard for Gandhiji that my suggestion worked like magic. As long as I stayed at the institute and so far as I can recollect, neither complained later about the other. The Cox family, in gratitude, invited me to lunch before I left Bangalore — the first instance of its kind, considering that I was only a student. Mr. Kothawala, on his part, had so much confidence in me that, when the Resident called him in August of 1942 and told him of the Government's policy with regard to the Congress and asked him to implement it in the institute, he called me the next day and disclosed to me what could be expected.

237

Curiously enough the spell of Bapu's influence wos most marked in the army. Perhaps it was due to the climatic reasons that Bangalore had the biggest cantonment. Some military officers used to visit the dairy for getting their supplies of milk, butter etc. Some of the cadets were Indian officers. When they came to know that the Mahatma's man had come to the dairy to receive training, they came frequently to see me at the hostel. I told them my experiences of life at the Ashram, and stories about Bapu—just as I did to the rest of the students. Some of them were unhappy over the atmosphere in the military which induced them to take to drinking and vice. I tried to strengthen their urge for leading a moral life by quoting Gandhiji's example. When they heard that I was leaving for Wardha, they visited me in numbers, among whom were Sikhs, Rajputs and Jats, besides one Mohammedan and one Christian. They asked me for a message. 'I am an unimportant person,' I replied, 'what message can I give you? If I have understood Gandhiji aright, then, in my opinion, he would like you to lead a clean life and refuse to fire upon unarmed people. But you must do so after careful consideration taking into account the implications.' To my great satisfaction they received this message well.

238

When I met Bapu after three years in 1945, I apprised him of all these happenings, and he was pleased to hear them. Before this, I had sent him an

account of my activities after I had been at Bangalore only for a month. He had then replied to me as under :

Delhi,
1-4-'42

Dear Ramnarayan,

I have brought with me to Delhi your letter dated 12-3-1942. I have gone through the rules and the curriculum. They are good. The regulations are also good.

What you are doing to improve hygiene and popularize Hindi is right. Do as much good as you can.

Mahadev is all right.

Blessings from
Bapu

239

Seeing Bapu work hard, those who lived around him were also naturally inspired to do likewise. I myself felt like working harder, and I requested Bapu to assign me something more than what I already had. That being his day of silence, he replied to me in writing as follows :

Your time is fully occupied. Do not undertake any more. Your main job is to attain proficiency in Khadi work. It is not difficult at all to do carding according to the Andhra method. Consult Krishnadas.

25-2-'40 Bapu

Gandhiji believed in hard work, but, at the same time, he did not encourage one to do more than one's capacity. He also took care that men with literary leanings should also get some literary work along with constructive or manual work to avoid boredom.

240

Bapu's companions tried to imitate his example in austere living as well, just as they did his habit of working hard. Guided by this impulse, I also gave up, once, consuming ghee as a part of my diet. There were instructions then that I should send him reports about my diet and health from time to time. When he came to know of this through the report, he sent me the following note:

Mirzapur,
19-11-'29

Dear Ramnarayan,

I have received your report. I had forgotten about the ghee. I do not consider that it was necessary to give up its use. You should take care of the body; therefore relax the imposition and start taking the requisite quantity. I shall be reaching Ajmer on the morning of the 25th. It will be my day of silence.

Blessings from Bapu

The Mahatma believed that the workers' health was not their personal matter but a national concern. If they neglect their health the nation's work would suffer and it would entail expense for their treatment. Therefore, while, on one hand, he laid emphasis on food being simple and cheap, on the other, he was equally firm on its being nutritious and scientific. At the same time, he believed only in that austerity which was permanent and desirable and was adopted after mature and calm thinking, and not under an impulse or for the sake of copying others.

241

Thakur Kesarisinhaji Barahath was one of the four sponsors of the Revolutionary Party of Rajasthan. He was a dynamic poet of the Dingal dialect. As a result of the influence of his poetry Maharana Fatehsinha of Udaipur came back from Delhi without attending the Coronation Durbar during the Viceroyalty of Lord Curzon — thus upholding the dignity of the House of Mewar. He was sentenced to life imprisonment in the Arrah murder case and his land and house were confiscated. But he made such a good impression upon the authorities in the jail that, on their recommendation, he was released before his sentence was fully completed. Commonly it is known that the bomb thrown at Lord Hardinge in Delhi was thrown by Shri Ras Bihari Bose but the fact is that it was thrown by Shri Jorawarsinha who was the younger brother of Thakur Kesarisinha, and he remained in hiding throughout his life. Thakursaheb's elder son, Shri Pratapsinha, was sentenced to a long term of imprisonment in the Banaras Conspiracy Case, and he passed away in jail. Thus this family was a family of martyrs. As I had worked with Shri Pratapsinha, so Kesarisinhaji regarded me like his son. When he heard that I was living with Bapu, he also expressed his desire to live with him, and spend the rest of his life in the service of mankind. When I mentioned this to Gandhiji he replied: "If Kesarisinhaji will come here, it will give me pleasure. Even Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru told me about his prison life. But if he has no idea of the way of life here, then inform him." I conveyed this to the Thakursaheb. He gladly undertook to live according to the Ashram way of life, but mentioned

that on account of a defect in one of his hands, he would not be able to spin. Bapu agreed to this exception and asked him to come. But it was not to be. He fell ill and after some time breathed his last.

242

A Sanskrit scholar, Parchure Shastri by name, was a great admirer of Bapu. He was suffering from leprosy. He came to live at the Ashram at Bapu's invitation. Bapu had improvised for him a separate hut and visited him everyday and dressed his sores himself. One day, I was deputed to work the fan for him. In the meanwhile, Bapu came and began to dress his sores. Then Shastriji said to Bapu with folded hands, "The mere sight of you soothes me. Please do not take the trouble to dress my sores." Bapu in turn, said, "Shastriji, you are very selfish. You deny me the pleasure of serving you." In fact, nothing gave Gandhiji greater joy than to help such patients. He never missed visiting them.

243

While I was in Wardha, suddenly my health began to fail. Krishnalalji, a Vaidya of Wardha, was a friend of mine. He advised me to take milk, *mosambi** juice and *Swarna Parpati* (a preparation of gold used in Ayurvedic medicine) and assured me of lasting benefit. But Bapu believed only in nature cure. He was dead against the use of *bhasmas* (purified and burnt metals). Still, when I told him of the Vaidyaji's prescription for me, he sent for him and talked to him while taking his meal. Vaidyaji felt very important and happy at this unexpected opportunity of meeting Bapu, who told him that though he did not hold with such treatment, yet was agreeable to let

* A kind of orange.

him treat me in the interest of my health if it would give me relief. As chance would have it, the very next day after the treatment was over, I developed a fever which turned out to be typhoid. It, naturally, upset Bapu. I had little faith in metal ashes, but even that little was now completely gone. Gandhiji was always ready to experiment and, if successful, he even changed his opinion but, in case of a failure, he reaffirmed his previous opinion.

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Complaints kept pouring in during war time that women were teased by soldiers stationed near Poona. A few cases of molestation were also reported. People were enraged and panicky. The British authorities not only ignored the protests but the Governor of Bombay went to the extent of condoning such behaviour as recreation for the young men who were ready to die, and said it was, therefore, pardonable. Perhaps India's hospitality was also mentioned. The inhabitants were so disturbed about the situation that there was a danger of breach of peace. Even a senior and responsible person like Kanaiyalal Munshi declared his inability to stick to non-violence under such circumstances and resigned from the primary membership of the Congress. Bapu wrote articles in the *Harijan* and issued press statements, and otherwise tried to solve the problem in his own way. In his inimitable and characteristic manner, he advised Indians to be brave and foreigners to show good breeding by refraining from going contrary to our traditions, customs and ways of life.

In such an atmosphere, a Maharashtrian lady came to see Bapu. She posed him the question, 'If somebody were to attack me, and if I had no non-violent means

to defend my honour, then should I not use violence in order to protect my honour?' Bapu gave a lengthy reply, the substance of which was this:

"I believe that nobody can attack a woman who is pure in thought and deed. Purity casts its influence upon others and the meanest of men will not dare provoke her. He dares only when she wavers or shows signs of weakness. If one is inclined to evil in spite of this, then a protest, or even a rebuke, from her will put the aggressor to shame and he would desist from doing wrong. Very few men would then be bold enough to make advances. But if he still persists, then the woman could think of many non-violent means if she is willing to part with her life in an attempt to save her honour. To bite the aggressor, to pinch him, to rain blows and kicks at him, I consider, are all non-violent actions. This is as non-violent as it is for a rat to attack a cat in self-defence because the rat knows that his attacks will not kill the cat and it is he who will have to die eventually.

"But even if these attempts fail to give protection, it is better to kill the assailant rather than permit an assault on one's honour. If you find no other way open to you, then go and buy a dagger from the Wardha bazar and stab the assailant in the name of Gandhi and thus protect your virtue."

Replying to another question, Bapu said:

"If the woman is unable to protect herself on account of the superior brute force of the attacker, then the woman need not commit suicide. Nor should society cast her off, because she is innocent. Rather, she deserves respect because she faced danger and adopted all methods to defend her honour."

Just as Bapu considered it better to win freedom through violence than to suffer subjection in the political

sphere, so also did he prefer violence to cowardice in individual cases. He believed that a coward could never observe non-violence, as it demands a high degree of personal bravery.

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Bapu received complaints of the manager's misbehaviour towards the students of a well-known educational institution for women. The complainant was no other person than Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel himself who never levelled an allegation against anybody without proper proof. On the other hand, the manager's reply was that the Sardar did not tolerate the presence of any independent and potential worker in Gujarat who did not subordinate himself to him, and that the allegation was therefore made against him out of malice. Bapu was not convinced of the argument, because he believed that truth was revealed only when persons fell out, and not when they are friendly, as they then try to shield each other. Bapu was interested only in seeing whether the allegations were correct or not. He never believed or acted on a one-sided version. According to his own clear-sighted policy, therefore, he counselled both the disputants to refer the case to an independent enquiry. They accepted the suggestion but wanted Bapu to shoulder the burden of conducting the enquiry. Even the disputants had implicit faith in his impartiality. A leading worker of Gujarat had come to Wardha on behalf of Sardar Patel to discuss the matter with Bapu, and I was present on that occasion.

Bapu said, "I would have gladly undertaken to do so but I am so occupied with the great problem confronting the country that I can neither find time for this work nor leave Sevagram. If I called the management, and the

teachers and girls to Sevagram, it would involve a lot of inconvenience, besides expense. It would also be improper to do so from the practical point of view. To avoid this situation, the inquiry may be conducted by somebody else, leaving the final decision in my hands." Some names were suggested but they were not acceptable. Ultimately, the accused proposed the name of. . . .The other party objected to it on the grounds that the gentleman was a member of the Hindu Mahasabha, and was an opponent of the Congress. Bapu replied, "Whatever may be his political views, he is a man of character. He will neither support immorality nor be unjust. Sardar Patel is a bold man. Even if a risk is involved, I think he would take it and would accept. . . ." When the Sardar's consent was sought, telegraphically, he agreed to the name.

Sometime afterwards the report of. . .was received. Bapu gave his judgment as follows:

". . . has written that the girls have, no doubt, made statements against the manager, but they are unwilling to face the accused and be cross-examined. It is therefore unjust to hold the accused guilty on the basis of evidence given behind his back, particularly when the accused is a person who has rendered valuable service by saving thousands of Hindus of Gujarat and Kathiawad from conversion to another faith. I agree with the opinion of. . .that he cannot be held guilty merely on the basis of such debatable evidence. It is a fundamental principle of jurisprudence that an enquiry cannot be complete unless the accused had been given a chance to cross-examine the witnesses. I have, therefore, proposed to dismiss the case. But I do hope the manager will do some searching of the heart, and, if there is a lapse, he should pull up."

Bapu did not show partiality even when his closest associates were concerned and gave only his unbiased judgment.

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Bapu had, sometimes, to talk in private in deference to the wishes of his visitors. Seeing this, even children longed to have private conversations with him. Perhaps they took pride in doing so. One day, my six-year old daughter, Subhadra, also hit upon this idea, and made this request at the time of the daily evening walk. Bapu was ever ready to oblige children. He gave her an appointment in the afternoon of the next day at 4 o'clock. He overlooked the fact that the time had already been booked for the meetings of the Congress Working Committee. Subhadra could not possibly forget the appointment — it was the chance of a lifetime for her. She appeared before Bapu at the right time in his hut. I was present as members of Bapu's staff were free to be present on all occasions unless there was an express indication to the contrary. The Congress leaders felt a little surprised at the appearance of this little girl, but Bapu, looking at her, said, "Oh Subhadra! I had forgotten about it." And turning to the leaders, he said, "I had asked her to come at this time for a private chat. You carry on the discussion. I shall join you when I am through with her." Saying this Bapu rose to his feet and took Subhadra to the verandah. She did not have much to talk about, so he came back in a few moments. Looking at their inquisitive faces, Bapu remarked, "Sometimes we ignore small children and do not give sufficient importance to the word given them. This is not right. Our word should bear the same importance whether given to an important person, or whether to a

humble one or to a child because God resides in all humans." On account of his consideration for every one, on a basis of equality, Bapu won the respect and love of every heart. When news of Bapu's demise was received, Subhadra was the one in our family, who bewailed the loss most of all, recalling that unforgettable instance.

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In the year 1928, an article by the well-known patriot, Shri Vinayakrao Savarkar, appeared in the weekly *Shraddhanand.* He had severely criticized the Mahatma. The *Pratap* of Kanpur published one or two editorials in reply to the article. Shri Savarkar was so caustically criticized that even I, as a Gandhi-devotee felt that he had gone a little too far. I conveyed my reactions to its late editor, Ganeshshankar Vidyarthi, and to Gandhiji. In reply to my letter Bapu wrote to me as follows:

Dear Ramnarayan,

I have received your letter. I did not notice what was appearing about me in the *Shraddhanand.* I glance through one or two papers for a few minutes. It is not my desire that any body should defend me. You may use this letter as you like. I am writing to the *Pratap.*

Yours,
27-2-'28 Mohandas

Bapu did not usually reply to the attacks levelled at him nor did he like others to do so. He believed that one's conduct was one's best defence, and that his time should be used for better purposes. Forgiveness was an intrinsic feature of his character.

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I had an attack of typhoid in the beginning of 1941 at Sevagram. Several Ashramites had their turn also. Gandhiji always practised nature cure and did not either take medicines himself or prescribe them for others. Therefore, special precautions were taken during the course of sickness. As a result, nobody else was afflicted after me. Everybody was cured with Bapu's treatment before I was. Mine lasted the longest as I suffered for twenty-seven days which was considered exceptional. It would, therefore, be in public interest to give an epitome of Bapu's mode of treatment.

Until my temperature came down to normal, I was given only orange juice morning, evening and noon, by way of food. For a drink I could take cold, but boiled water as and when necessary. I was kept in the verandah in spite of cold weather; and I had to answer calls of nature, eat and drink while in bed. The temperature was taken thrice a day. I was daily given a hot-water enema with soda bicarb and salt added to it, and a hot sponge bath. All the clothes worn were washed daily, and linens and coverings were spread out in the sun. No child was allowed to come near me. The excreta was taken far away and burnt so that flies might not carry the germs and contaminate food, thus infecting others. These precautions controlled the spread of typhoid fever. After my fever came down, I was given milk, fruit and vegetable gradually. I could take cereals, after a couple of months. Similarly, I was allowed to move about slowly or do a little work. During this period, Bapu came regularly, twice a day, to see me and inquired about my temperature, food, sleep etc. I was given no medicine.

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This treatment was carried out under the guidance of a nature cure physician, Dr. Das. He was kind-hearted, but strict in matters of discipline and rough in his talk. He spoke rudely, one day, for some small error of mine. I was perturbed, and my facial expression changed. Just about that time, Bapu arrived. He at once detected that something had gone wrong. "What is the matter?" he asked. I kept quiet, but Dr. Das himself explained everything. Bapu seldom gave credence to a one-sided version. As he turned to me inquisitively, I nodded affirmation. Then he said to him: "Doctor, truth is beneficial only when it is sweetened. This is why I have combined it with non-violence. It is not necessary that whatever is truth should be thoughtlessly blurted out. Sometimes it is duty not to speak. If it is essential to tell the truth, then it must be uttered in polite language so that the one to whom it is said, or he about whom it is told, may not feel hurt or feel as little hurt as is unavoidable. Then he will be convinced of our *bona fides*, and instead of reacting adversely, he will be influenced favourably." The secret of Gandhiji's success lay in his believing that truth and non-violence were two apsects of one and the same thing.

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Bapu did not favour the bringing out of newspapers and journals. He particularly dissuaded his near ones from entering the field of journalism. But even in regard to this he was always mindful of their discharging their commitments. He had advised me also against conducting the *Navajyoti* weekly. But when I told him that I was

committed to write for it, that my younger brother who managed it had been sent to jail and that, I considered it my duty not to allow it to close down, Bapu agreed and said, "It is our duty to honour the pledged word, if it is not morally wrong. But it should be fulfilled in our own way. I have decided to keep you apart from politics for the present. Therefore, write articles of a non-political nature and carry out your undertaking. With regard to helping it financially, I consider it necessary as a result of the arrest of Durgaprasad. But you should not involve yourself in it before I find a solution." He mentioned it to Jamnalalji who had had some unhappy experiences and disappointments about Rajasthan and Jaipur. Therefore, he did not seem interested. Gandhiji therefore entrusted the matter to Kishorlalbhai who then wrote to a well-to-do patriot at Calcutta. Thus, Bapu went out of his way to help his workers in redeeming their pledges and in pulling them out of difficulties.

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After I left for Bangalore to receive training in Goseva work, Swami Anand was appointed Secretary in my place. He consulted Bapu as to the arrangements to be made, should he be arrested. Bapu said, "Ramnarayan should not join the Satyagraha movement when he returns from Bangalore. He must look after the Goseva work." On my return Swamiji conveyed the message to me, and offered to retire in my favour. But God had willed it otherwise. I came to know that, while issuing warrants of arrest against those who had gone out of Ajmer, the Ajmer Government had issued one against me also. Instead of being taken to Ajmer as a prisoner, I preferred to go there myself. I left the Ashram and was taken to the jail direct from the Ajmer

railway station. Still, I remained in dobut about the correctness of my decision. When I consulted the Mahatma after my release in 1945, he approved of it and regarded it as more appropriate for a Satyagrahi. He admired every step that reflected bravery.

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On 23-5-'41 I sought clarification from Bapu of some of my doubts. Bapu wrote down the replies in my diary. Following are the questions and answers:

Q: Is cleaning of the library not a part of Ashram labour? Is it compulsory to peel vegetables?

A: Peeling of vegetables is a compulsory community labour. When there are too many of them to do the work, one or two can drop out.

Q: Going to prayer is the first thing in the morning, at 4 o'clock, without even evacuating the bowels. This induces a feeling of lethargy. If one is constipated, what should he do?

A: Constipation must be eliminated. Getting up at 4 o'clock may be abandoned. Eat mangoes, ripe or unripe, whichever are available. *Chapati* is likely to cause constipation.

Q: Is it proper to point out the linguistic errors of elders ?

A: Whoever be the elder, one should take active part in such discussions.

* * *

The following are some excerpts from my Sevagram Diary:

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12-5-'41: I had heard on coming here that Dr. Das's experiment had not been successful.

(Bapu wrote: It should not be so understood.)

I had a talk with Rajkumaribehn while walking with her. I had had experience of Bapu's generous nature. Rajkumaribehn strengthened my belief further. But this time we were also experiencing Bapu's firmness. Even in merely saying things, he had used plain words. That was my impression and Rajkumaribehn agreed with me that sometimes Bapu adopts common-place language and methods for conveying his deep thoughts. It becomes difficult to understand what he says, and it is risky to blurt out a reply without a proper grasp of the meaning. Sometimes it appears that he wrongly understands a situation or circumstance. And further, once he forms his opinion, right or wrong, he does not easily change it. But his motive is always pure and he is, without doubt, generous by nature.

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13-5-'41: When I went to Bapu to ask for time, he suggested that I accompany him on his morning walk. I went in order to have a private talk. When he asked me to say what I had in mind, I became puzzled and could say nothing. At last, we had a talk in private, but only at the end of the walk. He mentioned the evils of asking for a private talk. He said that if one's faults are exposed to others, it develops in him qualities of humility, righteousness and courage.

28-5-'41: I felt satisfied to know that Bapu had approved of the kind and number of the cuttings. I

omitted to write the names of newspapers on a few, considering that they were of a temporary nature. Bapu said that it was necessary to have the names. (The Mahatma kept an eye even on small things. In fact, he was master of details.)

31-5-'41: Had a talk with Bapu about the binding of the library books. He said, "We should try to live like poor people, spend only where we must. Therefore, we should get only such books bound as pass through many hands and as may be in a bad condition. Do not get new books bound for the present.

(Economy invariably was prominent in the mind of Gandhiji whenever he had to spend money.)

255

12-6-'41: Today, an aggressive and infuriated young man belaboured Keshavbhai. Though the latter was strong enough to retaliate, he did not do so but allowed himself to be beaten, thus displaying true heroism and saintliness. (He was a Japanese monk and lived at Sevagram with Bapu. He possesses remarkable qualities of rendering service to others, cheerfulness and self-control. He was a man of sterling character when he came to the Ashram and to this he added the quality of Ahimsa.)

16-8-'41: Today, Bapu spoke of Gurudeva (Poet Laureate Rabindranath Tagore) as a saint and stated that his qualities of patriotism and universal brotherhood were even subtler than those of his poetry. He exhorted us to purify our souls, and conquer anger, laziness, selfishness etc.

256

21-8-'41: Received the following letter from Gandhiji:

Dear Ramnarayan,

Your letter is good but do not overstep the limit. If a passing impulse is not the motive power, the sacrifice will sustain; otherwise it will cause more pain. A long-established habit is not easily broken. May God give you strength!

21-8-'41 Love from Bapu

This was talked out at noon. I told him, 'It was not done under impulse; I had given the matter serious thought.' He said, "The result will show how it was done. I have just cautioned you. The venture is laudable, and worth attempting. But from where will the money come? I do not want you to take to business. Do something to meet your expenses. Pratap is a good boy. I like him. Anjana is also there." This talk greatly soothed me.

(We both kept ill-health, and we had three children, and naturally felt that we were a burden on the Ashram, and this thought weighed heavily upon my mind. I had decided therefore to curtail expenses on our food, clothing etc., and informed Bapu accordingly. I received the reply reproduced above. Bapu welcomed sacrifice but insisted on calm and deliberate thinking behind it and did not like workers to enter business.)

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What Bapu feared did come true. I lost my health and Anjanadevi went to Bapu puzzled. He was observing silence. So he wrote this note to me:

Dear Ramnarayan,

I have listened to Anjana. I am pained at the state of your health, but there is nothing to worry about. I shall

break my silence soon after the prayer meeting. We three can then sit together and discuss the matter. It will not be proper to talk on the subject while out walking.

8-9-'41 Blessings from Bapu

We talked for about two hours and a half. Ba and Bapu's helpers were getting irritated. We were also feeling embarrassed at taking up so much of his time in connection with our personal problems. But he would not rest without first fully understanding others' difficulties, and trying to help them if he could by explaining his own views to them, and finding a solution. It was eventually decided that I should work for the Goseva Sangh and should live at Nalwadi (Gopuri). Before shifting to Nalwadi, I was asked to try, at Sevagram, Bapu's prescription, given below, for gaining health:

Morning:

Milk 12 ounces

Mosambi 1

11 a.m.:

Banana 1

Ghee ½ ounce

Vegetables as much as can be contained in an 8 ounce bowl.

They could be seasoned with lemon juice, and not more than 10 grains of salt.

2 p.m.:

Twelve ounces of butter-milk, 20 grains of soda bicarb and one *mosambi* if you feel hungry.

5-20 p.m.:

Milk 12 ounces

Vegetables as much as can be contained in an 8 ounce bowl.

Cucumber raw 2 ounces

Mosambi 1

At night if you feel very hungry then take one banana. Mash it and chew it properly. This is the maximum quantity. If your bowels do not move for three days, take an enema. Give me details every day so that, if I have to make a change, I may do so. Send them in writing.

If a great man like Gandhiji could take such interest in the health and welfare of his insignificant and weak workers, is it to be wondered at that they remain his devotees merely on account of his benevolence?

258

When I left for Ajmer in 1942, after making the necessary preparations, I, like several other workers, thought that Bapu had, perhaps, permitted subversive activites. On the basis of this supposition, I charted out a plan of action at Bangalore, and asked a student to get it implemented. About two years later, on the 26th of July, 1944, I wrote a letter from Ajmer jail to Bapu as follows:

Most Respected Bapu,

Accept my greetings. I saw your statement in yesterday's *Statesman*, issued as a rejoinder to that of the Sindh Home Minister, Mr. Gazdar. You said that you reiterate your unqualified opposition to subversive activities. Your views have compelled me to write you this letter.

I reached Sevagram from Bangalore on the 9th August, 1942, three weeks before time in order to meet you before your possible arrest. I had decided to stick to the chosen line of Goseva, and I heard that you also wish this to be done. But I learnt on reaching Sevagram that the Ajmer-Merwara Government had issued a

warrant of arrest against me. I, therefore, thought it proper to offer myself for arrest. Accordingly, I left Wardha with my family on the 22nd August, 1942, and was arrested at the Ajmer railway station on the 24th August. Since then I have been lodged at the Ajmer Central Jail.

It took me two weeks, after your arrest, to leave Sevagram. It so happened that, from the news that reached us through different persons coming from Bombay, we inferred that on the eve of your arrest you had given your assent to subversive activities; others also were of the same opinion ! On the basis of this inference, I wrote a letter to a student at Bangalore to pursue a certain campaign. In connection with it, Mr. Mumtaz Hussain, Deputy Superintendent of Police, came to see me on the 11th of April, 1944, and was followed by the Superintendent of Police, Mr. Graibham, on the 15th of April. I considered it advisable only to say that I had nothing to state at the moment, but in case the Government filed a suit against me I should tell the truth. Up to that time I was under the impression that I had understood you correctly and that what I had, therefore, written to the student friend on the 17th of August was the right thing to do. But, on carefully reading your reply to the Government report about the disturbances of 1942-'43 I became doubtful of my interpretation of your views. On going through your rejoinder to Mr. Gazdar, I am convinced that I have misunderstood you, and that my action on the basis of that interpretation was also wrong. Hence, I express my deep regret and willingness to undergo whatever penance you suggest. I also wish to write to the Government direct. If you approve of this, kindly guide me. In what terms, and in what manner should I do so? I am writing this letter

in consultation with leading political prisoners here. Kindly reply through the Chief Commissioner, Ajmer-Merwara.

Health is good.

Yours affectionately,
Ramnarayan

Strange it is that in spite of the letter being in the interest of the Government, the Chief Commissioner did not forward it to Bapu. Then I narrated the story to Anjanadevi at the time of interview and asked her to get me Bapu's opinion through Shrikrishnadas *Jajuji*. The reply that she received from Jajuji from Sevagram, dated 22nd February 1945, is reproduced below :

Shrimati Anjanabai,

Blessings. I received your letter of the 15th February two days ago. Your previous letter came to hand a few months ago. I had replied to that promptly. Whether you received it or not, I do not know. From yours I gather that you do not receive all the mail addressed to you.

I showed your letter to Bapuji. I herewith give you his reply, *verbatim*, in Gujarati. I hope it will not be difficult for you to understand it:

"Whatever he has done, Ramnarayan should admit in writing. In doing so, if he has to suffer further imprisonment, he should do so. This is the penance I prescribe, but only if he accepts it with head and heart.

"If in spite of this, he can escape the punishment owing to some legal flaw, he should not mind it. He should preamble the letter saying that it is being written by way of repentance. If there is a legal flaw, he would benefit. The Government should not misinterpret the motive behind it."

On seeking clarification of the last sentence, Bapu replied:

> Ramnarayan's admission is for purification and not for securing release. But the Government also should not feel induced to detain him or give him more punishment in view of the fact that he has volunteered an admission. According to law this cannot be done."

I hope I have made Bapu's mind clear to you. If there is a legal irregularity, then this should not be interpreted as a bar to an attempt to securing his release. Kindly acknowledge receipt of this letter. Everything is all right here. I trust the children and others are keeping well. Do let me know if I can be of any further service to you.

Blessings from Shrikrishnadas Jaju

I received this reply after about seven months. In the meanwhile, I wrote to the police that I could now reveal everything. Thereafter, Mr. Gulam Hussain, Inspector of the C.I.D., saw me, and I told him what I had done. On receiving Bapu's reply, I wrote to the Chief Commissioner on the 22nd of March, 1945 as follows:

'I am writing this under the advice of Gandhiji.

'On August 17, 1942, I wrote a letter from Sevagram to a student in Bangalore advocating a programme of subversive activities.

'On October 2, 1943, I finished writing a book of reminiscences in Hindi and at the close of my narrative alluded to the happenings of August 1942, with particular reference to Ajmer-Merwara, in a spirit of criticism of public apathy towards a campaign of defiance including sabotage.

'Although the aforesaid letter was intercepted by the police during postal transmission and the book is still an unpublished manuscript, and no harm could

have ensued from either, yet, I am convinced as a votary of truth and non-violence and humble associate of Gandhiji, that I was wrong in holding and expressing the views that I did in both the documents, views which are based on a misunderstanding of the alleged parting message of Gandhiji on the eve of his arrest in August 1942. This realization of error was brought home to me by a statement issued by Mahatmaji on the 25th July, 1944, refuting certain charges against Congressmen by the Home Minister of Sindh and reiterating his unequivocal opposition to acts of sabotage and the like.

'I lost no time in endeavouring to make amends to Gandhiji whom I addressed a letter (copy attached) the very next day i.e. on the 26th July 1944. Unfortunately, your predecessor, for reasons best known to him, turned down my request to allow the letter to reach its destination. I was consequently disabled at that time from obtaining Gandhiji's opinion about the necessity of my addressing Government directly on the subject. Only recently have I been able to know his mind and hence this confession.

'In concluding, I wish to make it clear that this communication is solely designed as a measure of self-purification and is not actuated by any desire of securing release.'

While in jail, I derived great strength from Bapu's guidance and moral influence. At a time when other prisoners were being released on tendering apologies or on humiliating conditions, I kept firmly to my resolution, so that even when there was serious illness in my family, I did not go on parole to pay them a visit. The Government did not launch a case against me, as expected, on the basis of this letter. They contented themselves by releasing me last of all.

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Gandhiji was always ready to guide not only his own workers and followers but also unknown patriots. During that time, Shri . . ., now one of the Ministers of the Ajmer Government, went on hunger strike in the Ajmer Jail. He was a friend of the former Superintendent. The jail officials had, therefore, to treat him with much respect and accord him special consideration and privileges. When the new Superintendent took charge, the officials withdrew those favours as if to retaliate Shri . . . , who was a dynamic personality. He went on hunger strike, which lasted for twenty days, on what appeared to others a minor issue. He was fed forcibly, and the situation began to get serious. His wife and friends became anxious about his health. In the end, they wrote in detail about this matter to Bapu who wired back advising discontinuance of the strike. Thus the Mahatma saved the prestige as well as the life of a compatriot to the great relief of his relatives and friends.

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A Parsee gentleman, Col. Khareghat by name, was now the Superintendent of the jail. Political prisoners were dissatisfied with his discriminating behaviour, and there were also complaints of corruption against other officials. When the Superintendent was asked to change his ways, no satisfactory reply was given. It was decided, eventually, that a letter should be written to the Chief Commissioner drawing his attention to the common grievances and in case, no satisfactory reply came forth within a specified time, one of the prisoners would go on a hunger strike. It was decided to address the letter

to him personally. After the time-limit expired, the prisoner went on strike according to the decision taken. In the meanwhile, a letter came from the Chief Commissioner to the Superintendent, and a jail official secretly showed it to me. The phrase '*ipse dixit*' used in the letter stuck in my memory. The Superintendent had been admonished for his arbitrary behaviour. This irritated him all the more and he took to harassing some of the prisoners still more by accusing them of 'mischief'. I was also worried about the friend who had gone on a hunger strike. I met the Superintendent and explained the situation to him. I suggested that either the authorities should accept the reasonable demands of the prisoners and should improve their behaviour or they should punish me. Col. Khareghat asked, 'What is your fault?' I replied, "I am the leader of this agitation and the author of the complaint to the Chief Commissioner." The Superintendent put me in solitary confinement for a week. Hearing the punishment, I told him, "You have been partial which I do not want you to be. You have the power to award me two weeks' solitary confinement. I expect you to make full use of your powers." The Superintendent was astonished at my knowledge of secret papers and at my extraordinary demand and said, "I am sorry, I cannot accede to your request." Inwardly, I saluted Bapu for the powerful impress of his ideas which had made such occurrences possible.

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The conduct of the Gandhites was not as good in jail as was expected. At times, mutual relations did not go smooth; some of them read newspapers which were smuggled into the jail, and secretly carried on illicit correspondence with outsiders. One or two descended so

low as to seek favour of the officials in order to gain a few advantages while a few others wore clothes made of mixed yarn out of financial considerations, although wearing pure Khadi was permitted in jail. Some, on being released under humiliating conditions, did not return to jail.

It can, however, be said that the conduct of the Gandhites was, on the whole, better than that of others, and while several leading Congressmen, some of whom were even office-bearers, were seeking release by giving undertakings, not one Gandhite showed such weakness.

I also saw that the general conduct in this jail of those who had lived with Bapu, or whose lives had been influenced by him, and of their dependents outside the jail, was more gentle and more serviceful and more self-respecting than that of others. The same was true with regard to diet. We ate simple food. My kitchen was, in fact, given the name of "scientific kitchen" by fellow-prisoners. The programme of daily prayer and menial work was observed throughout our stay. So also our reading and writing.

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On entering Bapu's room, or rather hut, two things at once attracted notice. One of them was a motto written on a thick piece of cardboard which read: "Do not negotiate when you are weak, keep silence when you are in temper." The first time my eyes caught this motto my gaze was fixed there and I thought, "This represents the quintessence of Bapu's personal and public behaviour." It is unprofitable to negotiate terms with the opponent about any movement in the absence of strength—whether it is violent or non-violent. Similarly,

as long as one remains in a temper, one's power of reasoning remains befogged, and one cannot come to a right decision as one is likely to think wrong and be perverse. One's mind must be calm and clear for sober thinking. Hence, control of the tongue is necessary.

Looking at my pose Bapu said, "This sentence is as meaningful as it is simple. But do you know of my *guru**? I knew that he regarded Gokhale as his *guru* in politics while Ruskin, Tolstoy, Thoreau and Raichandbhai had influenced his thought. But he had not acknowledged any one of them as his *guru* in the ordinary sense of the word, nor is there a *guru* for him in the special sense of the word, and, nobody perhaps deserves to be so. I replied, 'No.' Pointing to his desk he said, "Look there. Not one, but three *gurus*." He meant three Chinese clay models of monkeys. He disclosed that they were presented to him by a certain Japanese visitor. One of these monkeys held its hands against its ears; the second, its eyes and the third against its mouth. Gandhiji explained to me the respective meanings as, "Hear no evil, see no evil and speak no evil." Bapu actually put into practice these virtues. If he had to listen to an evil, see it or say it, it was only with a view to reform it, or for duty's sake.

263

A meeting of the All-India Congress Committee was held at Wardha in January, 1942. Maulana Azad was the President. At that time, newspapers were full of rumours pertaining to the supposed differences between Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress Working Committee. The opponents of the Indian freedom movement wanted

* Teacher.

to twist the news to their advantage. In his capacity as President, Maulana Azad explained his position in these words: 'People talk of our differences. But they do not know what pleasant personal relations exist between us. They are not political but family ties. Gandhiji heads the family, without him we take no decisions. Whatever he desires, we must put through. This captain of ours is, however, a unique person who would never force his will upon us but gives us perfect freedom to act according to the dictates of our head and heart. And we act as we think but sometimes we make mistakes. We then rush to him for guidance which we invariably get.' Bapu made a suitable reply as follows: "You have listened to what Maulana Saheb has said. This is not wrong. With regard to differences, Jawaharlal's name is being mentioned the most. But he is going to be my political heir. I carry his heart in my pocket; but I do not carry anybody's head. Even today he is doing my work, but the language he uses is his. I am confident that after my death, he will change his language also for mine." I noticed that Jawaharlalji sprang from his seat and took a place at the top of the pillow-rest. I could distinctly read from his face that he was feeling elated at Bapu's arresting announcement. The audience was surprised that, instead of selecting Sardar Vallabhbhai, Rajendra Babu, Rajaji etc. as his successor, he should choose one who disagreed with him in many respects. But Gandhiji's politics were ever surcharged with sacrifice, generosity and nobility. In keeping with his greatness, the Mahatma made this momentous declaration in such a natural manner that it created a deep impression of his impartiality on the public mind and thwarted the trends of rivalry and self-aggrandisement in public life of the country for a long time thereafter. Experience has shown

how right was Bapu's selection, seeing what Jawaharlalji has done in implementing Gandhiji's cult with regard to not only establishing the rights of the minorities but also creating peace in the international sphere.

264

When I reached Sevagram in 1945 after my release from jail, the Goseva scheme had undergone a change. The set-up suggested by the workers was different to what Bapu had told me after the demise of Jamnalalji. When the new plan was being discussed, Gandhiji was observing silence, and he did not do much to place his scheme before the meeting. When, at the time of the evening walk, I asked him his reasons for not doing so, he said, "My views are not changed. But I do not inflict my views upon others. By giving un-called for advice, and placing my man in charge of the organization I would only put him in an awkward position as he would lose his self-respect and would not receive support from others. Sooner or later they will have to reverse their decision, if work is their goal." Where people scrambled for offices, Bapu kept his men in the background. His definition of self-respect was also different from the ordinary one. If a man is not selected for the position he deserves, he should not consider it an insult. It is an insult only when he is forced on others against their will and thus becomes an instrument of discontent and even failure.

265

Bapu's devotion to truth revealed itself in his boldness and courage. He would not desist from what he considered to be a right course out of fear of either social reaction or exploitation of the situation by opponents.

A remarkable feature of his character was that whatever he did, he did openly. His life was literally an open book. Older type of seekers preferred to do their eating, studying, meditating etc. in private. Bapu did everything openly and publicly. He believed that, even for the attainment of salvation, it was better to have co-partners than to do it alone.

Similarly, he believed that it was better to live in the midst of temptations and to conquer them than to run away from them. He lived like a *sannyasi** though a *grahastha;*† observed *brahmacharya*‡ living in the midst of women; preferred to live a simple life as a trustee, though possessing money; was in favour of forgiveness in spite of having the power to avenge; practised non-violence though able to advocate violence; tried to keep away from holding office in spite of being in a position to hold office and if he held one, he did so unattached as a lotus in water.

266

He greatly favoured the Indian tradition of showing respect to elders, and even insisted upon youngsters doing so. He himself practised this. Those who have seen him appear before Bora Dada, the elder brother of the poet Ravindranath Tagore, or rise to receive, or see off, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, will bear testimony to it. Gandhiji always called those persons by their nicknames like Kaka, Mama, Gurudev, etc. — those who became so known, out of regard, even if they were juniors to Bapu in age.

* Hermit.

† A householder or a married man.

‡ Celibacy.

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Our ways of eating are so defective that it not only results in the wastage of time, money and energy but also affects women most adversely. As a consequence, they suffer in health, and half of our energy is rendered waste, from the point of view of national service. Women have to sit by the fire cooking all day long and, in certain communities, they have to keep awake till midnight in order to feed the menfolk. Gandhiji introduced two practical measures to remedy these defects. In the first place, he made it a rule that everybody should finish the evening meal before dusk to relieve women of their duty before nightfall. Of course, even in this, Bapu was motivated by a spiritual purpose. Secondly, he made men also share the job of cooking as well as serving food in order to lighten the work of the feminine members. This also brought home to men how much male superiority and high-handedness lay hidden behind their treatment of women.

268

I had been suffering from spermatorrhoea for a long time. It was expected that on coming to the clean atmosphere of Ashram life an improvement would be noticed. But it proved otherwise. I felt ashamed, and even my close friends were surprised. For a long time I concealed this from the Mahatma but eventually I had to disclose it. He suggested hip bath, enema at bedtime, mud plaster and several other measures but nothing succeeded. Then he asked me what I thought was the cause. I told him that the narrow interval between the two principal meals, i.e. from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., excess

of liquids, and taking of hot food could, perhaps, have caused my complaint. Bapu said, "I do not, personally, think that these are the causes but if you have any suggestions to make let me know." I mentioned to him that Pandit Ramchandra Sharma, an Ayurvedic physician of Ajmer, had advised me to leave an interval of 8 hours' duration between the two meals, and to eat only when I felt hungry. At the time of a meal I am to take not more than a quarter seer (half a pound) of milk and I should avoid taking liquid things, but drink only water three hours after a meal. I should not sit for long hours after a meal, especially at night time. Food should not be spicy or exciting. Bapu replied, "I can provide these facilities even here. But you are now going to Bangalore. Try these practices there. They will not interfere with the Ashram rules. If you are successful, I too would learn a new formula." I tried this experiment for five months and it proved to be a boon. After that, I never again suffered from the malady. Later, when I met Gandhiji, after three and a half years, this was the first thing that he asked and he was glad to hear my good report.

269

Bapu knew of the personal weaknesses of a leading worker of the States' People's organization. He did not know of a great weakness of his rival who was very close to him. The latter was kind to me. I knew of his weakness, and sometime in 1936, he fell ill and passed away. While discussing him casually, one day, Bapu said, "I do not know how...got ill suddenly. Do you know?" I knew the cause but I hesitated to tell him about it lest he should be shocked. It was difficult, however, to evade him. Gathering together my courage I said, 'Yes, ... too had the same weakness as his rival, who came to know

of it only during the course of their last imprisonment together. Poor man, he was very worried fearing that his rival would exploit this weakness of his. That, undoubtedly, hastened his end.' Bapu was greatly affected, but did not say much. Heaving a deep sigh he remarked, "I see ... died of fear of ignominy and ... is making merry without a care. Everyone commits a sin but this is the difference between a good man and a bad one."

270

When I reached Wardha with my family in the year 1940, there was scarcity of accommodation at Sevagram. Bapu had informed me of this previously. Therefore we put up at Jajuji's. After two days, a meeting of the Charkha Sangh was held at Bajajwadi and it lasted several hours. When it was over, Bapu called Jajuji and said: "Ramnarayan has come with his family. There is a scarcity of accommodation at Sevagram. If you arrange for their stay for some time, I shall be happy." Jajuji made suitable arrangements for us the very next day. Bapu's consideration for the needs of his workers, and his efforts to solve their difficulties made a deep impression on my mind. He was busy at the time and I had not even reminded him about the matter.

271

Gandhiji observed all the rules meticulously. It was a habit with him to go out for a walk for a mile and a half daily — morning and evening. He never missed it unless he was ill or on a railway journey. I noticed that even when it rained, he walked to and fro in the verandah of the Rustom Bhavan at Sevagram. In London, he found no time during the day; so, he went for a stroll

at 3 a.m. in spite of the freezing weather. On account of pressure of work, he did not get time to do his daily spinning of 160 counts at the minimum. So he used to spin, before retiring, late at night. He was equally particular about the time of his meals. When he had lengthy discussions with the Viceroy, he used to have his meals there.

People held him in high regard for his meticulous observance of all rules and regulations and co-operated with him.

272

It was in 1946-47 that riots broke out in Calcutta in connection with the Day of Deliverance observed by the Muslim League. I was there in a house from where the *Muslim locality* was near enough for me to see the happenings there. I noticed during those two or three days that the Hindu and Muslim goondas adopted a technique whereby, in case of doubt about their victim being a Hindu or a Muslim, they stripped him naked to see whether he was circumcised or not. If he happened to belong to the opposite religion, they beat him with lathi blows and hacked him to death with daggers. The Hindu proprietor of a printing press sheltered Muslim employees of his, and then handed them over to the police the next day. For this the Hindu ruffians retaliated by setting his press on fire. The sober-minded amongst the Hindus were already under pressure by the goondas, and were very frightened. A patriotic young Hindu informed me that the Muslim washermen and carders living in the shops below the building in which I was staying were in danger of their lives but nobody dared save them, out of fear of the revenge Hindu goondas would take. Even to venture to persuade them against such acts was a risky affair.

My hosts knew that I had lived with Gandhiji, and therefore had some regard for me. I showed a statement which Bapu had issued to the Press at that time, to the leader of the goondas, who was a watchman, and also to another leading resident of the building who had become a bitter communalist on account of the doings of the Muslims. Explaining it to him I asked: 'Will you allow Bapu to die? If these fugitive Musalmans are done to death, it will soon result in bringing about Gandhiji's death; on the other hand, if they are saved, he will live longer, and will be able to guide us through this trying phase our country and people are going through.' It worked and the Mohammedans were given protection and were handed over to the custody of the police the next day. About a dozen human lives were thus saved. Even the unruly goondas had a soft spot for Bapu in their hearts. In fact, the Mahatma was of the opinion that goondas were not at the root of the communal affray but mostly the educated politicians who used them as cat's paw.

273

During those days, separate second-class compartments were provided for Hindus and Muslims in the trains bound for East Bengal. I had to go to Tripura. When I came to know of this at the railway station, my relatives advised me to take off my Gandhi cap and sit in the compartment reserved for Hindus. At this time of unrest a Congressman was at a greater disadvantage than an ordinary Hindu. The Gandhi cap was regarded a symbol of a Congressman, and was therefore a cause of possible danger. Venturesome by nature as I was, I considered it not only an act of cowardice to conceal my identity by causing a modification of the dress by taking off the cap but also unworthy of one who was a

humble follower of Gandhiji. The thought which flashed into my mind was that if Bapu came to know of this, what would he think of me? I disregarded their advice and decided that I should not only not take off the cap but travel in the compartment reserved for Muslims. Of course, I decided to act with tact in addition to my courage. As I looked round the compartment, I noticed that the clothes of one of them were of Khadi, though coloured. I sat next to him. I soon opened the subject of Sevagram and Gandhiji. All the Mohammedans in the compartment became so friendly that the time was pleasantly spent in eating, laughing and chatting. It was satisfying to know that even in that befouled atmosphere, Mohammedans had great regard for Bapu and were very keen to hear about him.

274

When I boarded the steamer at Golando, there were no Hindus among the passengers except a relative of mine and myself. I was wearing the Gandhi cap. The passengers were looking at me curiously. Perhaps they regarded me as lacking foresight or, at least, too adventurous for my own good. May be, they thought, they would get an easy victim. When I reached my cabin, a Hindu employee of the British steamship company whispered into my ear, 'Babu, your bad luck has brought you here but do not step out of your cabin, if you want to live.' This being my first boat journey, I was eager to have a look around. However, acting on my well-wisher's advice, I did not go up on the deck but kept moving about my cabin only, though this was boring. I kept my Gandhi cap on. Seeing me, a Khadi-clad Bengali gentleman, a Congress worker of Noakhali, came to me, and started a conversation. We derived much comfort from

each other's society. In reply to my inquiry, he told me that the loss of property and life in Noakhali as reported in the newspapers, was an exaggeration. Listening to the account of bravery displayed by some Hindu Congressmen in the face of brutality, I felt my daring and fearlessness was nothing when compared to theirs, and I received fresh stimulus to keep to my convictions. Bapu was in the Noakhali area then. My friend told me how the Hindus of Noakhali were slowly regaining the confidence they had lost, and how the Mohammedans were undergoing a change of heart. This good news made me pay homage in my mind to Bapu.

275

English-style meals were served on the steamer. This was my first experience of such food or service. On one side of me was an English couple who were engaged in business at Lahore, and in front of me were seated two American missionaries. All the four appeared to desire an introduction to me. Seeing me in Gandhi cap and Khadi clothes, they must have taken me to be either Gandhiji's man or his follower. I also wanted to meet them because I did not know how to use a knife and fork, and I wished to learn how to do so. Therefore, I asked the lady sitting near me: 'I am unaware of European table manners. Will you be so good as to guide me?' She promptly replied, 'Of course. But may I know if you are personally acquainted with Gandhiji?' When I told her that I had lived with him for several years, all the four became intensely interested in me. Not only at the noon meal but also at dinner, they continued asking me questions about the Mahatma. There were questions, and comments but they made it clear that they regarded

Bapu as a great man and looked upon his cult of non-violence with sympathy. As chance had it, all the four had lost some of their relatives and property in the last two wars. Therefore all of them agreed that if Gandhiji succeeded, and if war could be outlawed, then he would, undoubtedly, be regarded as the greatest benefactor of mankind.

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On my way back, I had to return alone, my relative having left earlier. By the time the train was near Dacca, I was the only passenger in the compartment. I was apprehensive that in that tense atmosphere of communal carnage a couple of goondas could break into the compartment and do me to death. When Dacca was the next station, I learnt that there was trouble and that Hindus were paying dearly. This caused me more anxiety. As the train reached Dacca, I somehow gathered courage and put on my Gandhi cap as usual. Presently three or four Muslim youths in shorts and carrying guns in their hands entered my compartment. For a moment I thought there was no escape, but I quickly discovered that they were government servants and were going on a shooting expedition. I felt much relieved and started talking to them. I found that they were as interested in listening to stories about Bapu and as appreciative of his ideals and personality as the other Muslims. My knowledge of Urdu and of the Islamic religion came in handy. I found that from the very beginning Hindu nationalist workers had committed a blunder in not establishing direct contact with the Muslim masses and classes and in leaving it entirely to Muslim workers.

277

Ashabehn and Aryanayakamji of the Ashram are a remarkable couple in several respects. It is an inter-caste, inter-provincial and inter-religious marriage. They speak different mother tongues, and possess good knowledge of the English language, yet they have made Hindi the medium of conversation at home. Influenced by Bapu's high principles and ideas, they have taken to Ashram life, disowning all material things. They had one son and one daughter. Unfortunately, the son took a number of sugar-coated quinine pills at one time, mistaking them for sweets, and, in spite of the best efforts, could not be saved. One can imagine what a shock this untimely and accidental death of their only son must have been to the parents. A terrible gloom spread over the entire Ashram. Gandhiji viewed this incident from two angles. One was personal and the other social. From the personal point of view, he poured out his love and fatherliness on the bereaved father and mother. He joined the funeral of the child, and continued going to the pyre on the hillock for several days. Secondly, he pointed to the defects in our domestic life and to the faulty method of bringing up children with a view to prevent such accidents in future. He regarded every calamity as God's warning and advised us to learn a lesson from it. He suggested that we should not place dangerous things carelessly about and that we should caution children against taking anything without prior permission.

278

During my detention of 1942-45, I wrote a monogram entitled "The Cow *v.* the Buffalo" in English. I gave it to Bapu to read, and he took it with him to Panchgani to do so. He liked it, but did not give his approval without first referring it to Satish Babu and Dr. Sushila Nayyar for confirmation of its scientific aspects. Thus, while on the one hand, Gandhiji encouraged his followers, on the other, he never committed himself either to an opinion or course of action unless he was quite sure of it himself. Another remarkable thing was his idea of economy. Instead of sending it per registered post, he wrote to me that the son of Dadasaheb Mavlankar would be returning in a few days and that he would return it through him, and he did!

279

Bapu himself treated the patients at the Ashram or asked for the services of a nature-cure doctor, but, on occasions, he consulted the civil surgeon or some other physician for diagnostic purposes. Once, the civil surgeon had been summoned. As far as I remember, he was a Mohammedan gentleman. Bapu was at his meal when the doctor was about to leave. He came to Gandhiji and said, 'Bapu, I come to you but I get no fee. Today I must have it before I go.' Bapu was ready with a reply. He took a *khakhra** out of his dish and handed it to the doctor. The doctor ate it on the spot. It appeared from his face that he felt honoured. What more generous a gift or fee could Bapu give! Thus, did the Mahatma win over people with wit and affectionate behaviour.

* A thin, hard-rolled rusk.

280

I was returning from Madhya Bharat to Ajmer in 1946. Near Chittorgarh our train was derailed and the engine and a few coaches turned turtle. It was due to sabotage. It happened in the wilderness and at midnight, but luckily no one was injured. Eighty per cent of the passengers were Mohammedans, who were going to the Urs fair of the Khwajasaheb at Ajmer. Communal riots were rampant throughout the country. Passengers had got out of the train and were in the open. I sat on my bedding with my Gandhi cap on. A young man clad in Khadi came to me and said: 'There is a whisper going on among the Mohammedans that the Hindus should be attacked. So please take off the cap.'

I said to myself: 'The cap denotes that *I* am Gandhiji's follower. How can I disgrace it? It must stay.' I told him so, and suggested, 'I bear no ill-will towards Mohammedans. The Mahatma's teaching is that instead of fearing or hating them, we should render help and succour to those Muslims who might be in trouble.' I rose to my feet and so did my friend and we inspected every compartment inquiring if anybody was injured, or needed water, food or any other kind of help. The result was that we befriended Muslim passengers, and they made us travel in their compartment. When food was brought for them by the Muslims at Bhilwara, we were lovingly pressed to share it with them.

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I had occasion to meet several princes in those days. I found that if they had faith in any leader, it was in Gandhiji. On this trip I met a prince of a small State of Madhya Bharat. He was irritated with the workers of

the Praja Mandal in his State. Personal relations had been so strained between them that, on the one hand, baseless allegations were being levelled against the ruler and on the other, ruthless oppression was let loose. Even violence had been used. The prince was young and his wife still younger. They were a gay, and charming couple. On account of my being a disciple of Gandhiji, the Rani came out of purdah and asked me to advise her husband. I explained to the Rajasaheb what advice Gandhiji would have given him as a ruler as well as an individual. I said: 'From the point of view of administration, you should give responsible Government to your people and should remain as their guardian, dedicated to their service and well-being. You will thus be able to put an end to the agitation. In your personal conduct you should meet evil with good. In spite of your power to punish and to use violence, you should forgive your opponents and behave in a non-violent manner. This will bring about a revolution in your personal relations. Otherwise too, we should read the signs of the times, and act accordingly; this is wisdom and farsightedness.' 'Suppose they consider it weakness on my part?' the Rajasaheb questioned. To this I replied, 'Gandhiji believes that if correcting ourselves or doing a right thing is misinterpreted by others as weakness, we should let them do so. It would be wrong for us to give up righteousness on this account.' The young prince promised to consider my advice. A few days later, I received a letter from the Ranisaheba, dated 14th May 1947. She wrote as follows: '. . . Revered father, you have saved me.' Thus Bapu's philosophy affected everybody, rich or poor, and ennobled their lives. The reason underlying the Ranisaheba's expression of gratitude was that, on account of being influenced by Bapu's way of thinking

and action, the Rajasaheb had corrected himself and had thus afforded great relief to his wife.

282

It was in 1942 that Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya was the President and Shri Balwantrai Mehta the Secretary of the States' People's Conference. Shri Mehta had decided to renounce his allegiance to the leadership of Shri Amritlal Sheth and work under the guidance of Shri Vallabhbhai Patel. The Sardar wanted him to work in Kathiawad. But before relinquishing the Secretaryship, Shri Mehta hoped that it would be possible for another experienced person to take over the job. He came to see me at Gopuri and insisted that I should shoulder the responsibility. My old associations with that field of work stirred within me a desire to accept, and I could not decline the offer. But I said to myself that I should consult Bapu and Jamnalalji before definitely committing myself. It was however decided that I should consult Jamnalalji and that Dr. Pattabhi should consult Bapu about the matter. Jamnalalji did not favour my leaving the Goseva Sangh but, at the same time, he saw the the importance of putting a Gandhian worker to take up the secretaryship of the States' People's Conference. So he said: 'Let me consult Bapu. I do not suppose that he would approve of this.' And so it was. Bapu vetoed the proposal. He followed to the letter the Gita tenet, स्वधर्मे निधनं श्रेयः परधर्मो भयावहः । meaning: Better is death in the discharge of one's duty; another's duty is fraught with danger.

283

A retired engineer of the North West Frontier province was a great admirer of the Mahatma. This frail-looking man was my neighbour and friend at Sevagram. He had come to live with Bapu with a view to get relief from domestic unhappiness and seek spiritual uplift through service and discipleship. During the course of a conversation he revealed to me that he did not hold the same opinion about the Frontier Gandhi, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, and his elder brother, Dr. Khansaheb, as people ordinarily did. He did not consider them above communalism. This chilled me. He had told this to Bapu also, yet Bapu had allowed him to stay in the Ashram. This puzzled me all the more. But I found that Bapu possessed a remarkable knack for picking the good qualities and making good use of them. He never hesitated to avail himself of the services of even the humblest of workers. In fact, Bapu's Ashram was a meeting point of various elements, and he therefore jocularly referred to it as *Shambhu Mela* or *Shivjiki Barat*.*

284

On my return from Sevagram, I stayed at Sabarmati for about six months. During that period, I conveyed to Bapu in a note the bad effects of the last World War as I noticed them on the various sections of society such as Congress workers, constructive workers, railway and other government employees and the public. I feared lest Gandhiji should take it as a criticism. I had therefore expressed regrets in my letter in advance for making

* A wedding party of god Shiva, which consisted of all types of interests and men, i.e. ill-assorted group.

uncalled for remarks. Bapu sent the following reply on 8th November, 1945:

Dear Ramnarayan,

Received your post card. I like it. I have myself noticed in my tours what you have written as the demoralizing effect of war on our society.

Blessings from Bapu

He thus encouraged workers to make independent observations, and kept himself well-informed regarding the prevailing conditions and shared his observations and experiences with them.

285

The Mewar Government banned my entry into the State in connection with the second Bijolia Satyagraha in 1928, and also induced the Gwalior State to do likewise. I did not try to get the order withdrawn. It was too much to expect the States to do so of their own accord. When Bapu heard of this in 1946, after eighteen years, he asked Rajkumari Amrit Kaur to take up the matter with Sir T. Vijayaraghavachariyar, the Diwan of Udaipur. As a result, the ban was removed within a few days. Thus, what could not be achieved by agitation was done merely by a polite hint from the Mahatma.

286

I noticed the following daily occupations of Bapu at Sevagram in 1945:

4 to 4-20: Bapu got out of bed as soon as the bell rang. A split half of a *datan** was kept in a glass of water by his bed the previous night before he retired. As he

* Twig of a particular tree used for brushing teeth.

had no teeth, he only scrapped his tongue with the twig. His tooth powder was made of burnt almond shells and common salt. There were also a bottleful of water, a chamber-pot and an iron pan for spitting. After his toilet, he proceeded to the prayer meeting.

4-20 to 5: At the prayer *Ishavasya,* the verse of the Ishopanishad, the *Namyo ho renge Kyo*, a Japanese Buddhist verse, and a few verses from the Puranas and the Upanishads were recited by the workers. After this, recitals from the Quran, the Zendavesta etc. were made, and *Ramadhun* was sung. At the end of the meeting a song by an Indian saint in Hindi, Gujarati or Marathi was sung. Except the song, everything else was recited in chorus. Bapu gently clapped hands in rhythm. Last of all, chapters from the Gita were read according to a certain order so that the whole text could be completed in a week's time. On the 22nd of every month, which was the date of the death of Ba, the entire Gita was recited.

5 to 6: After prayers, Bapu drank warm water with honey and a small pinch of soda bicarbonate added to it, and went to bed again to get a little more sleep.

6 to 8-30: Rising at 6 a.m. he answered the call of nature, using a commode. After that, he breakfasted. This meal consisted only of goat's milk and mango or orange juice. While having his breakfast in his hut, he also interviewed the manager of the Ashram and others desirous of seeing him.

After breakfast he went for a walk. Bapu walked very fast, but after developing foot trouble, he held on to somebody's shoulder for support when walking. He walked on the Wardha road for three quarters of a mile and then turned back, invariably visiting the Ashram patients.

8-30 to 11: Now began Gandhiji's writing work. Bapu had a special contrivance on which he could either sleep or sit. It was a plank-cot in two parts. One part served for sleeping with his legs stretched out; the other as a head rest while sleeping or as a back rest when sitting. The whole of it was covered with a mattress. He either disposed of correspondence, or wrote an article for the *Harijan* or prepared a hand-out for the press. From 9-30 he had his massage with mustard oil done by either Kanu Gandhi, Pyarelal, Sushila Nayyar or Mira-behn. At that time he read important papers and, occasionally, would doze off. Then he took a hot bath in a tub in a closed room. He needed a helper when taking a bath. All this was finished by 11 o'clock.

11 to 1-30: When the bell rang, Bapu went to the common dining hall. The inmates, after picking up a *thali*,* two *katoris*†, a spoon, a glass and an *asan*‡ each, sat in two rows. A cushioned seat was always brought for Bapu to sit on. He generally helped himself to a dish of predominantly leafy vegetables but usually took only its juice together with a few pieces of a loaf prepared in the Ashram in a special way from coarse flour, goat's milk, *khakhara*, powdered *neem* leaves, garlic paste and fruit juice. Bapu liked his food hot and used to chew it well. That is why he wore artificial teeth at meal times. He kept a part of his food for the children and the patients. Bapu took about an hour to finish eating. Often, some urgent interviews were also granted during that hour. After this, he went to his hut to wash his hands and rinse his mouth.

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* A dish.

† A small bowl.

‡ A cloth seat.

He would then glance at the newspapers and while doing so he fell into a nap. At this time, one of the ladies would fan him. Ghee was applied to the soles of his feet, and during his rest period at noon, he had mud-plaster applied to his forehead and stomach.

1-30 to 5: At 1-30 Bapu took lemon juice and honey in a tumblerful of tepid water. He then used to go for an evacuation. From 2 to 4, he dealt with correspondence. His letters were opened by one of his secretaries, and the letters which called for his personal attention were placed before him and the rest were dealt with by others. He received hundreds of letters, journals and books from inland and abroad. To the workers, Bapu replied briefly and to the point in his own handwriting as far as possible, as this pleased them. He used post cards as far as possible, and was very particular about getting the post off before the clearance hour. He spun yarn from 4 o'clock onwards and also granted important interviews during that time.

5 to 9: At 5 o'clock the bell for the evening meal was rung. Gandhiji partook of his evening meal, which was similar to the noon one, also in the company of others. Often, at this time also he gave interviews. After the meal he went out for a walk along the same route as in the morning. At this time also he was consulted by people who sought his advice and guidance. He amused himself with children of whom he was fond. On his return he went again on his visit to the sick.

Usually there was a good gathering at evening prayers and Bapu addressed the Ashram personnel on national or spiritual subjects. Except for the recitation of the Gita which was omitted, every other item was as in the morning. Verses from the Ramayana were sung in a particular tune and, instead of reciting *shlokas* at

random, the best nineteen *shlokas* of the second chapter of the Gita which dealt with the subject of detachment were read. Kanu Gandhi sang to the accompaniment of the *dilruba* again as in the morning. Spinning was compulsory. The daily account was rendered at the time of the evening prayer. This also served the purpose of taking the roll-call. Bapu's yarn was generally wound into hanks by others but he made his own slivers from the cotton carded by himself. He seated distinguished guests by his side while taking food or at prayers. Ladies sat in front of him, and men on either side of them.

Rising from prayers, Gandhiji did some reading and writing or gave interviews till 9 p.m. He always slept in the open except when it was too chilly or rainy. He only wore a loin cloth in the form of a *kachchha* and covered himself with a shawl when necessary. When he was ready to sleep, oil was applied to his scalp and his body shampooed and massaged gently in order to relieve the aches and pains. Bapu wore wooden sandles in the Ashram and chappals made from the hide of a dead animal for going out.

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When I took leave of the revered Mahatma in August 1945, I asked him the question: 'Which is the worst form of violence?' After thinking for a while he replied, "In my opinion, revenge is the worst form, just as hypocrisy is of untruth. If one attacks a person or harms him under great provocation, it is not so serious because when one cools down one repents or undergoes penance for the deed. But when one deliberately, and in cold blood, decides to take revenge, that is calculated and intentional violence, which allows little room for

repentance or reform, and that is its most dangerous aspect."

This thoughtful analysis of my question and his reply worked like magic on one occasion, and that was in 1948 when a worker one day suggested, '... has carried out nefarious propaganda against you by distributing handbills, and opposing you in public life. This has been going on for a long time and is damaging your reputation. Just now that man's immoral life is being exposed. If you give a little help, he can be silenced for ever.' Bapu's sermon came immediately to my mind and I refused to do anything in the matter. Of the good deeds that I have been able to do in my life, this one stands out as the most outstanding. This bit of Gandhiji's valuable advice has saved me many a time from taking revenge.

APPENDIX

ANJANADEVI'S REMINISCENCES

1

My first opportunity to meet Bapu presented itself in the Marwari hostel of Wardha before the Nagpur session of the Congress in 1920. Chandramanibai, daughter of Shri Kesarisinh Barhath, was with me at the time. Both of us had discarded purdah but we put on foreign clothes and jewellery. We touched Bapu's feet and offered him a certain number of our ornaments for his work. He expressed pleasure at our discarding purdah and said, "But this will not do. You must work among women. Discard all jewellery; wear Khadi and demonstrate your acceptance of a new way of life within twenty-four hours from now." Pointing to Chandramanibai's jewellery he questioned: "Your father is a recluse, a living martyr. Being his daughter, how can you wear all this?" This first meeting had a spectacular effect on us. We put on Khadi, I discarded jewellery for good, and both of us began to work among women. Within a few days, we enrolled about one thousand members for the Congress.

2

About the same time Kamala, the eldest daughter of Jamnalalji, appeared. Pointing to the gold bangles on her hand, Bapu said, "Why are you wearing these handcuffs? Give them to me." 'All right, take them,' simple Kamala replied. "And you will not have new ones made?" queried Bapu. Kamala hesitated. Gandhiji,

therefore, did not accept the bangles. We noticed that he never, in any case, accepted a gift from young people without the consent of their parents.

3

Our second meeting took place in Jamnalalji's garden soon after the Nagpur Congress. By that time, the Maharashtra branch of Bapu's Ashram had been established at Wardha. Vinobaji and Ramniklalbhai Modi had arrived from Sabarmati. Modiji's wife, Tarabehn, was also with him and we were introduced to her, and we three were together. It was noon time. Janakibai, Chandramanibai and I were wearing *saris* and blouses in yellow. I wore no jewellery. There was brocade on Janakibai's *sari*. Looking at us Bapu remarked, "Here come the heroines of Rajasthan in saffron robes." When we took our seats, blushing at this complimentary remark, Bapu said, "Why have you come in this sun? This attire is good. And you appear determined also." We replied: 'We have taken the pledge to wear Khadi but from where can it be had? We could make the *saris* by piecing together bits with difficulty. And we are only three.' "If you three are firm," said Bapu, "you are equal to three thousand. Mani is *mani**, being the daughter of such a father. But what have you put on? Will you also wear this jewellery?" And then he added jocularly, "She is a Marwari. Where is the forehead piece?" In the meanwhile, Tarabehn Modi appeared. Seeing her he said, "What are you wearing round your neck? Ramnik is a *sadhu*.†" Tears stood in Tarabehn's eyes. She said, 'I have only this. What will happen to us in the future?' Bapu promptly replied, "When the

* Jewel. † Recluse.

power of renunciation develops in you, then you can discard them." We gave an account of the little Congress work that we had so far done, and he expressed satisfaction and encouraged us to do more. We returned filled with the belief that he would bring about the regeneration of womankind.

4

It was sometime before the Salt Satyagraha that a separate prayer meeting began to be held for women in the mornings. Bapu attended this meeting in the morning while in the evening he attended the joint prayer-meeting. The *shlokas* included in the women's prayer were different from those in the common prayer. Gandhiji himself taught us how to pronounce them correctly and explained their meanings. We were expected to ask questions and Bapu answered them at the meeting. One day, he gave a brief sermon for women on self-protection. I asked the following question: 'Sometimes it so happens that men and women living together live innocently, like brothers and sisters, and on account of daily social intercourse with one another move with each other freely. At times, they come in bodily contact with each other, and though the woman's mind remains pure, not so the man's. Does such physical contact also make a woman blameworthy?'

Bapu replied, "The man is usually to blame. Broadly speaking, the woman is not to be blamed. But to permit development of intimacy to such an extent is, to say the least, indiscreet on the part of woman. Speaking ethically, if the woman is perfectly chaste, nobody can dare to cast an evil eye upon her. If a man dares to look at a woman passionately or accost her, he does stand condemned, but the woman will be blamed only if she

accepts the overture. But in case she demonstrates her displeasure and fights against such deeds, then she will be taken as noble and not guilty."

Q. If the woman does not remonstrate in the initial stage because of love, fear, indecisiveness or intimacy, and matters advance, then what should she do?

A. Under such circumstances, she should, if necessary, kill or be killed but not allow herself to be seduced.

5

Some of the girls at the Ashram freely sat, even during the days of their menstrual period, among the others during meals. Some women objected to it and wished that they should take meals in their own huts. Bapu touched on the subject at the time of the women's prayer meeting and said, "Nathji says that by taking food touched by one who is menstruating, the incantations which he had learnt to use effectively will lose their power. Men like Kishorlalbhai may agree with this view. There may be exceptions. But others should not mind this." The next day, I sought clarification and said, 'There appear to be two opinions on this subject. One view is that for three days, a woman, during the monthly course, should not take bath and should not work or lift heavy weights nor touch others. The other view is that there is no need for such restrictions. What is your opinion about this?' Bapu replied: "There is no harm in her touching anyone. Ordinary work and bath can also be undertaken according to one's habit. But lifting weights might be harmful. There should be no objection to eating in the rows along with others. The menses create desire and circumstances conducive to the production of progeny. Those who desire to lead a life of abstinence should forget their monthly periods."

6

Hundreds of children were dying of small-pox in Ahmedabad. There had occurred the deaths of two infants in the Ashram also, and this caused much alarm. Bapu said after the prayer meeting: "There are two opinions about vaccination; one in favour of it and the other against. I, personally, am against vaccination as it is harmful. They use the blood of a living cow for the purpose. Vaccination suppresses the pox poison which leads to other complications in the system. Doctors have not yet been able to convince me that it is not so. Still those parents who desire to have it done are free to do so." Though I was worried about Pratap I was not getting him vaccinated because of Bapu's views on the subject. After he had explained his views at the prayer meeting, I expressed a desire to Bapu to have my son vaccinated; and Bapu himself asked Dr. Hariprasad to vaccinate the child.

7

One day, at the time of the morning walk, my daughter, Sita, mentioned casually to Bapu that Bhansalibhai took as much as fifteen seers of milk per day. On Gandhiji showing surprise, she took him to Bhansali. Bapu asked him, "Bhansali, do you take as much as fifteen seers of milk per day?" 'Yes, Bapu,' he replied. 'When I get seventeen or eighteen seers of skimmed milk, I take it. When I do not get that much, I manage with *neem* leaves, raw pumpkin and raw papaiyas which I keep handy in a basket. That serves me.' Bapu smiled and walked away.

8

Bhansalibhai was a professor at the Gujarat Vidyapith and he had also been abroad for higher studies. At one time he was the editor of the *Young India*. He was a man of fashion and taste. But Bapu's influence turned him into a *fakir*. He was enamoured of Hatha Yoga and had even sewed his lips for a while in order to conquer speech, and lived only on *sattu** to conquer the cravings of his palate. As a result of this, his eyesight ultimately suffered. He then gave it up under Bapu's advice, but continued to mortify his flesh. In order to conquer passion, he underwent a fast for 57 days. Even at Sevagram he kept roasting in the sun for the entire day. He covered his scalp with a cloth and then kept spinning in the sun or taught children English, arithmetic, etc. while they sat in the shade. He did not attend prayers and went to bed at 7 o'clock. He would get up at midnight and work at the hand grinding mill. One day somebody inquired of Bapu, 'Does not this grinding of corn at this unusual hour disturb you?' "Not at all. I sleep soundly. When mothers grind, children sleep. Like them, I am also used to it." Bapu often told stories about his childhood and amused others, while, at the same time, drawing a moral or teaching a lesson. He, however, did not interfere with the work of others for his own gain.

9

Once Sita and I were ill at Sevagram. Bapu had returned from a tour and it was his day of silence. Alighting from his car, he came straight to us. 'Why have you come here straight?' I asked. 'You should have

* A coarse flour of roasted grains.

had a wash and rest first.' Bapu placed his hand on his chest and pointing with his finger said, "Say it from your heart." The fact is that both of us were greatly comforted by Bapu's arrival.

10

He was particular about correct pronunciation. Pratap and Sita were taught English by Rajkumaribehn and Urdu by Amtulbehn. This tutoring took place near Bapu's hut and within his hearing distance. One day he told them: "I like your pronunciation. Walk behind me at the time of the evening stroll and when I am not talking to anybody, recite Sanskrit *shlokas*. I shall enjoy it while you would gain practice by repeating them." Bapu always tried to kill two birds with one stone.

11

Gandhiji laid great emphasis on the regulation of diet. The inmates of the Ashram were forbidden to dine out at these people's who though they lived in the Ashram, did not have their meals in the Ashram Kitchen. They were told that in case they expected to stay out at Wardha the whole day and anticipated difficulty in getting food similar to that which was provided at the Ashram, they should carry food with them from the Ashram. One day, a girl from among the women disciples of Bapu ate at Parnerkarji's house. When Bapu asked her, she first denied, but later admitted, having done so. Thereupon, he observed a day's fast, which set the girl right for ever thereafter.

12

One day my daughter Subhadra found a rupee lying somewhere. She ran up to Bapu to hand it over to him but as he was resting, Amtulbehn prevented her from doing so, lest his sleep be disturbed. Bapu, overhearing

this, said: "Amtul, let her come. Children are my life." He then praised Subhadra and sent her to the manager for crediting the rupee to the Harijan Fund.

13

A son of one of Bapu's friends was an eccentric type of fellow. He ill-treated his wife. The Mahatma invited him to Sevagram to stay at the Ashram, where he still persisted in his bad habits. One day, his wife told Bapu: 'He beats me, and I do not wish to live with him any longer.' Gandhiji tried his best to reform him but all his efforts were of no avail. He merely blamed Bapu saying that he only wanted to separate him and his wife. Eventually, he left the Ashram. After a few days, he came back repenting and Bapu admitted him once again. Bapu generously gave delinquents opportunities to reform their ways. But he did not tolerate the harassment of women. With this point of view he did not hesitate to separate married couples, if it were necessary for their well-being.

14

When the Poet Laureate Rabindranath Tagore passed away, a non-stop spinning programme was observed for twelve hours. On the occasion, Bapu remembered Deenabandhu Andrews and remarked sadly that funds had not as yet been collected for his memorial. Bapu thought of raising the required amount out of the wages of community spinning. We laughed at the idea saying that it would take an eternity to raise a sum of rupees six lakhs out of the wages of collective spinning. The Mahatma then replied, "You people do not understand. You will see the miracle of this yarn." So,

after two or three days, collective spinning was held. The yarn was sold for four or five hundred rupees. One hundred and fifty yards of yarn spun by Bapu himself was rolled in three rolls which were bought by three persons for Rs. 50/- each. When the Sardar heard that Gandhiji was working hard for the sake of a memorial to his friend, he sent word that if Bapu would absent himself from the Ashram for seven days, he would raise for him seven lakhs in seven days! It happened so, and Bapu's prediction regarding the yarn came true. Unshakable was his faith in the spinning wheel!

15

In 1930...had refused to fire on defenceless Satyagrahis. Upon this, the court martial sentenced him to several years' imprisonment. On his release from jail, Bapu had invited him and his wife to Sevagram. They lived in the hut next to ours. One day I took Sita to Wardha for treatment of her eyes. On my return I found that Subhadra had developed whooping cough. While complaining of disturbances, this man falsely complained to Bapu that we were eating all kinds of food. He was also rude to me. I felt hurt. On enquiry, Bapu found the allegations baseless. He came to my hut and kept walking to and fro for about an hour explaining matters and trying to pacify me. Finally he said, "...'s brain has been affected by long imprisonment. You should put up with whatever he says without feeling offended or hurt. As you know, I too am according them certain privileges not given to others by allowing husband and wife to live together in the Ashram. Do you know anything about Arjunlal Sethi? What a great patriot he was! But eventually he lost his mental balance and died

in a *durgah*.* Sometimes prison life makes a man break down." On seeing an important person like Bapu give so much time to my problem, and show such an attitude of tolerance towards offenders, my mind was set at ease.

16

Often, I kept indifferent health, which was a cause of excessive expenditure, and a burden to the inmates. I was unhappy over this situation, and said to Bapu, 'I am not of much use but only a liability to the Ashram and this feeling depresses me.' Bapu consoled me saying, "I believe that sickness is controllable and that it results from transgressing the laws of nature. But when it does come, it should be treated and suffered with fortitude. But that we have no use for you here is not correct. You give time to attend to the kitchen, and you spin four or five *goondis* of yarn; what more should we expect of you? This amounts to making good use of your time." I said: 'I have not had much education, and of what importance is the work I do?' Bapu replied sharply: "You took part in Satyagraha on several occasions, rendered service to the Kisan women, and your work has not been of less value than that of educated women. But even your present assignment is not of any less importance from the point of view of national service. No work is big or small. Any work done sincerely, intelligently and whole-heartedly is of equal value. What is really necessary is that one should work to the best of one's capacity and no less." I then learnt the true meaning of work, its importance and value.

* Tomb of a Muslim *fakir* held sacred.

17

Pratap, who was only thirteen, had appeared in the examination of the Khadi Vidyalaya and had come out first. The prescribed course of the history of the Congress had not been fully taught; he did not understand a heavy topic like the Round Table Conference, and so he failed in it. In the morning, the successful students went to Bapu to invoke his blessings. Finding Pratap missing, he inquired about him. On learning the cause, he sent for him and said, "Do only successful students get blessings? Has injustice been done to you?" 'No, Bapu, not at all. When I am unsuccessful, I am not entitled to a pass certificate,' replied Pratap. "I am happy to hear that, but, in my opinion, you must get a certificate," said Bapu. As rules did not permit it, Pratap did not get a certificate, but the next day Bapu mentioned this incident at the time of the convocation ceremony. While Bapu did not interfere with the working of the rules, he did take into consideration the intrinsic merits of the individual.

18

Pratap was shocked at his failure because he excelled many prominent workers in spinning. When Bapu heard of it, he called Bharatanandji (the Polish engineer, Maurice Frydman) and said, "Rajkumari teaches Pratap English; you give him lessons in the workshop." When he reported to Gandhiji after a few days that Pratap could become a good engineer, Bapu decided that he should appear for his matriculation by studying at Wardha, but that I should live with him at Wardha instead of admitting him into a hostel. I came to know that Bapu was in favour of a child living with

his, or her, parents instead of in a hostel, from the point of view of its health and character development. But, in spite of being against modern education, Gandhiji made an exception in deserving cases. In the end we found that his decision about Pratap was fully justified.

19

At Sevagram, the clothes of those who were unmarried were usually stitched by a tailor. Even threads used to be run through the quilts by the tailors. I did not like this at all. I was also sorry that my time was not being fully utilized. I proposed that I should be given such sewing. One of the sisters objected as she thought that the tailor would thus be deprived of his livelihood. When Bapu was consulted he replied: "Keeping the same analogy, we snatch a job from the sweeper also. But self-reliance is our objective. Whatever we can do by ourselves we ought to do. We should seek the help of others only when we ourselves are unequal to the tasks."

20

Sevagram was full of snakes and scorpions and incidents of scorpion bite occurred frequently. Pratap was a victim once. I was suffering from cough. Thinking that Pratap would disturb me, Bapu said he would keep him for the night. When I came to know of this, I felt that it would disturb Gandhiji's sleep. I therefore sent word that Pratap should be sent back. Bapu acceded to my request on the condition that the boy be looked after by Sankaranji and Krishnachandraji and not by me. The Mahatma came to see Pratap in the morning, and made him clean his teeth and then gave him milk

and Porridge. After taking these, Pratap fell asleep again. Bapu was, in fact, more than a father to women and children, particularly during their sickness.

21

An humble inmate of the Ashram was going back to Madras. He did not want to take anything for the way except some of the Ashram food. The manager instructed us to prepare for him some *bhakaris*. A few of us, women workers, were busy cooking in the kitchen. One of us remarked, 'Everybody becomes a lord in the Ashram. We have to cook for their journeys also.' During those days the level of cleanliness in the Ashram Kitchen had gone down and flies had started frequenting the place. Bapu's standard of cleanliness was such that he was much against the presence of flies, either in the kitchen or in the latrine. Bapu, who had come there to see things for himself, was standing behind us without our being aware of the fact. He overheard us and said, "Yes, they become lords in the Ashram. Therefore, *bhakaris* must be made for those setting out on a journey. When they are made for me, why not for this man? But let me know why there are so many flies there?" After that nobody made such remarks, and the kitchen arrangements also improved. Bapu was always on the side of the humble or the ordinary folk.

22

. . . used to be in charge of fruits, and she distributed *mosambis* to the sick. She sincerely believed that there was a difference between important persons and ordinary workers, and she saw nothing wrong in discriminating between the two with regard to the selection of the *mosambis*. Accordingly, one day I received slightly

inferior ones while the best ones were sent to Birlaji and Acharya Narendra Deo. As luck would have it, Kishorlalbhai came to see me, and he noticed the *mosambis*. He was opposed to making such discriminations. He frowned, and calling Krishnachandraji, showed him the *mosambis*. This reached Bapu's ears also. I felt embarrassed at this. Bapu withdrew this distribution work from ....He was very strict in such matters and spared nobody.

23

Once Sita, Subhadra and I had whooping cough. Gandhiji directed the Ashram manager to see that one man remained with us all the time to look after us. He should keep spinning and, whenever there was need he should help us. I felt unhappy about the arrangement and succeeded in changing it to the extent that the gentleman entrusted with the job should call on us four times daily instead of being in constant attendance. Gandhiji came to see us the following day, and finding no man there he was upset. I tried my best to clarify the position but Bapu was adamant and sent for Shri Krishnachandraji. Seeing Bapu in this mood, Krishnachandraji turned pale. The Mahatma said sharply, "Somebody must stay here all the time. If you people cannot manage, then I shall come and stay here." After that, not only did this arrangement last until our complete recovery, but Bapu's personal supervision increased to such an extent that I never felt the absence of my parents, or the husband.

24

When Jamnalalji's condition worsened prior to his death, Bapu received a telephonic message from Wardha that he should come immediately and bring his medicine for controlling blood pressure. And soon the car arrived to take him to Jamnalalji. As he was about to get in, he received yet another message to say that Jamnalalji was no more. Hearing this, Rajkumaribehn, Birlaji and I accompanied Bapu to Wardha. We noticed that nobody shed tears except the mother of Jamnalalji. Bapu's companionship and philosophy of life had taught restraint to the Bajaj family. There was pain and grief in every breast. Jankidevi was in a terrible condition. She wept saying: 'What have I to live for now? I too should be cremated along with Sethji. I would like to be a *sati*.' Bapu consoled her saying, "True *sati* is she who carries on the work of her husband even after his death. Jamnalalji has died serving the cause of the cow. You should perpetuate it. Kamalnayan will own his property." Jankidevi said, 'Bapu, what do I possess which I can give in his name? What ability do I have which I can dedicate to promote his mission?' Bapu replied: "You can give away for Goseva work the two and a half lakhs of rupees which Jamnalalji has bequeathed in your name, and dedicate your mind and muscle to the same cause. Kamalnayan must, of course, provide you your maintenance. If not, the Ashram will."

True to the ideal of the Hindu woman, Jankidevi held water in her palm and took a vow to dedicate her all to her late husband's mission in the very presence of Gandhiji as advised by him.

25

After a talk with Jankidevi, Bapu took care of her old mother-in-law. Approaching her, Bapu said, "Mother, weeping would make the departed soul sad. What if Jamnalal has gone; am I not your son?" Thus consoling her, Bapu and I remained behind with the old lady while others were asked to attend the funeral. When, later, we reached the cremation ground, Bapu had to take care of Jankidevi till the last rite was over. The cremation took place at Gopuri in front of Sethji's hut. When we returned to Sevagram, Bapu said to Rajkumaribehn: "Only last night I dreamt that it would not have been possible for Jamnalal to protect the cow. It is a tremendous burden. His shoulders were not equal to it. This job is harder than the attainment of Swaraj itself. The good man was crushed under this very load." I sometimes ask myself the question: 'Jamnalalji has gone; Bapu has followed him; who will complete the task?'

26

Once Ba fell ill. The doctor advised that she should not move out of the hut. Thereupon Bapu arranged for a commode to be placed in the hut. Ba did not like this but he persuaded her to use it. It was my duty to clean it and I did so the first day. The second day Ba forbade me to do it. She said, ' I do not need the commode. Bapu makes so much fuss for nothing. I could walk to the latrine.' I insisted on her using the commode, but Ba would not listen. When Gandhiji came to see her in the evening, I was also present. He came to know of all that had happened. He said: "Anjana, why have you failed in carrying out your work? If

Ba expresses her complete satisfaction with your work, only then are you successful." Ba said, 'If I use the commode, I shall clean it myself.' And she did so. Ba took pleasure in serving others, but did not like others to serve her. Such was her humility.

27

The same day Bapu said: "Ba, Amtul will bring your food here. Do not come to the kitchen." She replied, 'Why? I am able enough to go to the kitchen.' In fact, the reason was that Ba wished to supervise Bapu's meal herself in spite of her illness, as she believed that only she could serve him food properly.

28

Once, Bapu thought of cutting off the hair of the girls. Women love their hair dearly; it, at times, excites men's passions. Some girls had their hair cut as Bapu advised, while others hesitated. One day, Sita got a headache and Bapu got his chance. When he came to see her, he said, "If you have your hair cut your headache will disappear and more hair will grow." Growth of hair on Sita's head was poor. So, the idea of a luxurious growth pleased her. She, therefore, had her hair cut. By chance, she got fever. Bapu kept her on *mosambi* juice. A few days later when she asked for bread, Bapu gave her a *khakhara* out of his own plate. Ba saw this. Feeling that the child was still hungry, she gave her an additional piece of bread which pleased Sita very much. Ba seemed even fonder of children than Bapu.

29

Ba did not like to take food in the kitchen; so, she cooked her own. Her food contained sugar, spices and fried things. She too shared her food with children as did Bapu. He tolerated this. But, occasionally, he disapproved of the practice and evinced his displeasure, though mildly and indirectly. One day at Ba's meal, he remarked: "It appears that a highly seasoned dish has been prepared today. I feel tempted! Who could eat so much? Will you share it with me?" Bapu, of course, would never eat such food. In fact, he exercised the most rigorous restraint upon himself, but was lax towards others provided they did not offend against principles.

30

Ba celebrated the *Divali* festival and Bapu's birthday in her own way. But she introduced simplicity into the observances out of regard for Gandhiji's feelings. One important feature of her programme was the distribution of *chane-murmure*, *copra* and currants. As a devoted wife, she followed Bapu in rendering service to others but, as a Hindu wife, she preserved her independent character in celebrating festivals.

31

On Bapu's birthday in 1941, the girls of the Mahila Ashram came to offer greetings, and presented him with *dhotis* made out of yarn spun by themselves. The Mahatma said, "I am not entitled to receive these gifts. Ba is." Thereupon the girls said, 'Being senior, you should accept them.' Bapu retorted, "No, she is senior to me by six months. She herself says that I am senior, because at the time of my admission to school, my age

was given merely on conjecture, which was a little more than the actual. There was no horoscope. That age has now come to be accepted." As the *dhoti* was too small for Ba's use, Bapu had to wear it. Thus, being intensely human Bapu delighted in pleasing others with his wit and jocularity.

32

Subhadra was very young, five or six years of age. She used to spin on the *takli*. One day she made up her mind to spin on the wheel. Children thought they could carry the Mahatma in their pockets. She suddenly announced: 'Bapu, I am going to spin on the wheel.' Gandhiji said, "That you may, but how will your arm circle round?" She kept quiet but from there she went to Bharatanandaji and explained her difficulty. He dearly loved children. He made for her a single-wheel portable Charkha. She spun on it coarse yarn for a month or two and had cloth made out of it. One day, when Bapu was washing his hands and rinsing his mouth after his evening meal, she approached him and said: 'See Bapu, I had a Charkha made, spun on it, and now I have come to present you with the cloth. You will have to accept it.' Bapu exploited every opportunity for indulging in jokes with children. He said, "But I do not receive alms. If you take payment for it, I shall accept the cloth." 'I have not come to sell cloth,' said Subhadra. 'You accept presents from others, but you do not wish to accept from me because the cloth is not good.' "Oh, no, Subhadra! That is not the reason at all. Your cloth is very good indeed! I can make towels or can use it for my bandages. I do not use all that I accept from others by way of gifts. My own yarn gives me sufficient cloth—more than I need; so, the surplus I give to

Ba. Anyway, if you will not accept full price, then accept some payment." Thus Bapu told her. Perhaps he was testing her to find out whether she could be persuaded to accept something for the cloth. Seeing that she was firm, he cut a piece of cloth — sufficient for a bandage — and accepted it. Subhadra returned home triumphantly. Even an important personage like Bapu enjoyed a defeat of this kind.

33

Pratap continued to suffer from tonsilitis. When Gandhiji's treatment failed, he sent him to Wardha for the operation. After his return, Bapu came to see him every morning and evening. The very first day Bapu inquired: "How are you?" Pratap wrote it down, 'I am all right.' "Can't talk?" asked Bapu. Pratap wrote back, 'I can talk but the doctor has told me not to do so. You have taught us to observe discipline." Bapu was pleased with the answer and wanted to know about his diet. Pratap wrote: 'A liquid diet has been suggested.' On return to his hut Bapu sent him the apple juice that was there for his own use. When Amtulbehn brought it to him, Pratap wrote: 'I have taken *mosambi* juice. And I do not want to deprive Bapu of his share. Kindly take it back.' Amtulbehn replied, 'Bapu insists that you should have it, since he believes that your need is greater than his.'

34

We noticed in the case of Pratap how permanent was the effect of Bapu's selfless and sincere dealings. When we were returning after seeing the picture 'Sant Tukaram' in Bombay, Pratap enquired of his father, 'Father, should students see pictures?' Chaudhariji

replied, 'They should not. This is Bapu's opinion also.' Bapu's opinion, his father's advice and upbringing in the Ashram's austere atmosphere had such an uplifting effect on young Pratap's mind that he never went to a cinema again during his student life. On several occasions, elderly people and his friends tried to persuade him to accompany them to a show but he remained firm. He went only after his wedding, when his father took him and his wife to a picture.

35

I experienced this with regard to all my children. I hardly ever beat any of them. But these incidents date back to the time when they did not have the good fortune to live under Bapu's influence. But ever since they returned, after staying for two years with Bapu, I have had no particular difficulty in dealing with them. In the Ashram they learnt to be clean, simple, hard-working, disciplined, dutiful, humble and cultured. They, therefore, remained free from common vices such as lying, using abusive language, being difficult about eating, avoiding studies, etc. This alround development of mind, heart and body could only, I feel, be the result of Bapu's great affection and interest in them.

36

I recollect another incident in support of the above fact. In 1943, Sita and Pratap were both suffering from typhoid. Chaudhariji was confined in the Ajmer jail. A family friend and Homoeopathic physician, Dr. Rajpal, and his wife were treating them. The C. I. D. Inspector, Mr. Puri also used to come to them for treatment. It was one of his duties to keep a watch upon us. When

he came to know of my worries, he suggested to the doctor that, in case I so desired, he could recommend Chaudhariji's release on parole to the authorities. I knew that Chaudhariji would not like to be released for such reasons. Neither was I prepared to make such a degrading request to the Government. Then the doctor sounded Pratap. He mentioned my worries and suggested that it would be nice if he could have his father with him. But Pratap said, 'I would not spoil my brave father's patriotism for my sake. And if Bapu hears that I had agreed to your suggestion what would he think of me?'

37

One day, Pratap slapped Sita in a fit of rage. Unintentionally, I mentioned it to his father in jail in the course of our conversation at the time of an interview. He felt hurt and wrote to Pratap thus: 'For a boy who has lived with Bapu and learnt the lesson of non-violence, a lapse of this nature is a serious matter. If you have sincerely repented, you should ask Sita's pardon, and take a vow not to repeat the offence again. If I do not hear from you within three days, I shall go on a fast.' Since it was too much for Pratap to make his father feel hurt and go on a fast in prison, he wrote to him immediately. Unfortunately, as Chaudhariji did not receive the letter in time because of the delay in censoring, he went on a fast. Pratap never again behaved with his sisters in that manner.

38

A young German Jewess usually came to stay with Bapu during the vacations. Once she brought her bitch also with her. Bapu said, "Why have you brought her with you, spending so much money on her?" The young

lady replied, 'She is very dear to me, and would have pined for me if I had left her behind. Besides, I did not spend money on bringing her here as I had put her in a covered basket.' Bapu felt all the more hurt and said, "This amounts to cheating. Apart from that, if you want something to love, you could adopt a poor child." The lady felt small. In spite of having tender feelings for all living beings, Bapu differentiated between human beings and animals, and deprecated even quarrelling with Mohammedans on the question of cow-slaughter.

39

Gandhiji walked fast when out for a walk. For support, he rested his hands on the shoulders of any two girls. When rivalry sprang up between the girls, he fixed turns for them. One day, it was the turn of the Jewish girl. As she reached late, Subhadra jumped in and holding one of Bapu's hands, placed it on her own shoulder. In the meantime, the Jewish girl appeared and demanded her privilege. But Subhadra refused to yield. Also, instead of benefiting from this support, Bapu was finding it uncomfortable as Subhadra was too short for him. However, Bapu said nothing. I felt embarrassed. I signalled to her to leave Bapu, but he forbade me to do so, and went on explaining to Subhadra till she was convinced. She then voluntarily yielded place to the Jewish girl. Bapu, who solved complicated problems of the world, took the same interest in children's affairs, taught them and enjoyed their company.

40

One day, at the time of the evening prayer, Raihanabehn Tyabji broached the subject of scarcity of food in the country and asked Bapu's views regarding its solution. He replied: "The entire responsibility for the production of food grains should not be placed on the shoulders of the *kisans*. All the consumers should grow them according to their capacity. We should grow groundnuts, sweet potatoes, vegetables, etc. on whatever land we can find and make use of them." Bapu acted on what he preached. He began cultivation in his court-yard, and everybody followed his example. Gandhiji had an inexhaustible treasure of constructive ideas.

41

Bapu was keenly interested in dietetics in which he carried on experiments. Boiling destroys vitamin C in milk while raw milk contains bacteria. So he advised adding tomato or lemon juice to the milk; plenty of lemons grew in the Ashram compound. But, after squeezing the juice, the rind was thrown away. This I did not like. One day, I suggested to Bapu if the rind could be collected in a jar and a little lemon juice and table salt added to it, it would make a palatable pickle. Since the Mahatma was fond of experimenting and sought methods of economy, he at once agreed. After a fortnight when this new pickle was served in the Ashram, everybody liked it. Then, the making of such pickle, without the addition of spices, became a rule.

42

Similarly cocoanut was used freely in the Ashram. Tender cocoanut was finely sliced and given to patients, and its milk served to the sick and the invalid; the residue was mixed with vegetables to lend flavour, or was eaten by Krishnachandraji or somebody else. When an objection was raised to the mixing of the residue in the vegetable preparations, Bapu ruled out the objection. He always encouraged any experiment concerning nutrition.

43

Subhadra was five or six years old. She set her heart on having Bapu's copy of the Ramayana and his small lantern and, one day she actually made the request. Gandhiji said, "If you learn how to recite its verses, I shall give them to you." Subhadra accepted the condition, but she did not know even the alphabet as yet. However, Bapu gave her his Ramayana and lantern. At the same time, he asked her to take care of them and bring them at the time of prayers. Subhadra learnt a couple of verses from Sita and noted down their location in the book. One of the verses read:

रघुकुल रीति सदा चलि आअी ।
प्राण जाहि पर वचन न जाअी ।।

[This is the tradition of the House of Raghus that no matter if one perishes, his word must be kept.]

One day, she went to Bapu and recited the verses to him. On his asking where the verses could be found, she pointed out the place. Bapu understood the trick and said, "You kept the Ramayana with you for such time as you took to learn these verses. Now, when you

are able to read it, you shall be presented with a copy for your own use." Subhadra, who was reluctant before, now began to learn to read and write. When we left Sevagram, Bapu presented her with a copy of the Tulsi Ramayana with commentary. He even continued to encourage her as is evident from the following letter, dated 15th May 1945, sent from Mahabaleshwar:

Dear Sita,

Your letter is good. Subhadra will now recite to me the Ramayana. You also seem to have made good progress. Pratap has done very well indeed! Where did Jugalkishorji learn? What treatment is he giving to your mother? Whether I reply or not, you should write to me. As far as I remember, Parnerkarji has not given me anything. Convey my blessings to your father. I trust he will recover and be quite fit once again.

Blessings from Bapu

44

Once, Pratap's father had a heart attack in the jail. I was worried and upset. In that frame of mind I wrote everything in detail to Bapu in order to lighten the weight on my mind. He replied to me as follows:

Mahabaleshwar,
2-5-'45

Dear Anjana,

Received your letter. I do not worry about Ramnarayan. He is brave and will recover. It is good that you have written to me, and I am pleased to hear that all your children are well. They must have grown up by now. Let me know of their progress in their studies. You have not given your address in your letter. How are you? I am quite well.

Blessings from Bapu

In this affectionate manner, did Bapu express feelings to his workers in order to comfort and please them. At the same time, he would not fail to draw attention to even the smallest of errors like the omission of one's address. In this postcard Bapu's use of the Gujarati words *ladake* (children) for *bachchon*, *abhyasa* (study) for *padhai* and *mote* (grown up) for *bade*, is noteworthy.

45

On the eve of our departure from the Ashram, Bapu told me, "If you continue to spin sufficiently, I shall consider it good service." Accordingly, we span approximately eight lakh yards of yarn during the year, got about 125 yards of cloth made out of it and presented the account to him on the occasion of his 78th birthday. Giving this information to him, I sought his blessings. He replied as follows:

New Delhi,
20-9-'46

Dear Anjana,

Received your letter. Going through the details you have sent me, I must congratulate you. Daily you spin four hanks (of 640 threads each). How much time does it take? How much time does Subhadra take to spin?

What does Sita do?

Blessings from Bapu

Gandhiji had hundreds, if not thousands of workers like us. To remember the names of their children and make inquiries about their health and studies is not a small job. But there was enough room in Bapu's memory and heart to remember everybody — even the humblest among us.

46

One day in the Sevagram Ashram a snake crept into the stock of firewood. If not for my own sake, at least for the sake of the children, I became very frightened. Munnalalbhai was considered an expert in catching snakes. When he was informed about it, he arrived with his wooden tongs. In spite of all his skill, he caught it with difficulty after trying for about an hour, but it was injured in the process. As was the rule, the reptile was set free in the woods. But Bapu had been worrying about the dangerous creature also having been injured. He referred to this incident in the evening, after prayers, in the following words: "Ordinarily, a snake is an innocuous creature. It bites out of rage only when provoked. To catch it in such a way as to hurt it is violence. The difference between man and animal is that an animal behaves according to its instincts while man uses his brains."

47

Once a complaint reached Gandhiji that the husband of his beloved adopted daughter maltreated her. He called both of them. After listening to both, he said, "The bond between the wife and the husband is that of love, and their status is equal. One who cannot respect this is unworthy. If you belabour . . . I shall take her away from you." The girl, perhaps, did not foresee that Bapu would go to that length. She herself interposed saying, 'Bapu, please give him one more chance.' He agreed. But he never tolerated ill-treatment of women and would go to any length in order to check it.

48

Once Premabehn Kantak came to the Ashram with the palms of her hands and the soles of her feet coloured with *mehandi* leaves. The Ashramites felt it was unbecoming, and even ridiculed her mildly.

On seeing Premabehn, Bapu smiled but he turned to the inmates and said : "You do not know Premabehn. When she was a student at college, she used to keep a rod in her hand and used to serve such of the boys with it as would tease girls. Her character is beyond reproach." When he was convinced of somebody's inner qualities, he did not care about external appearance.

49

The Mahatma had come to Ajmer in 1934 in connection with the Harijan tour. Ba accompanied him. I had undertaken the duty of cleaning their night-soil pots. Ba saw me doing it. She insisted that I should not, and did it herself. Ba would not allow anybody to serve her. If possible, she prevented others from doing such duties even for Bapu.

50

On this occasion, the food arrangements for Gandhiji's entourage were in the hands of Shri Omkarnath Bakliwal and myself. Food and other matters were to Bapu's likings in all respects. Shri Bakliwal decided to serve some sweetmeats to Bapu's men. I apprised him of the Mahatma's dislike for serving sweets. Suddenly Ba appeared and asked: "What is the matter ?" Shri Omkarnathji said, 'Is there any harm if we serve *rasa-gullas* to your men?' Ba was in favour of the Ashramites getting some nice things to eat now and again. She

therefore, replied: "No, no harm. Do serve them." At the end of the meal, we offered the sweets. Seeing them, Bapu said, "What is all this?" We knew Bapu's rigid eating habits and so we did not dare serve those to him. As for serving them to others, we narrated the story. Bapu smiled and said, "So you have taken sanction from Ba! Then how can I interfere in the matter? Ba enjoys doing such things."

51

One day, Vinobaji delivered a sermon at the Khadi Vidyalaya at Sevagram, where Pratap was a student. Vinobaji made certain remarks about common salt. Influenced by what he said Pratap took a vow to abstain from taking salt for four months. Considering it inadvisable, I informed Bapu. He at once called Pratap and argued with him thus: "A vow should be taken after careful thought. Salt is necessary for the development of bones. It is useful up to the age of thirty, and, after that, if it is not injurious, it is at least unnecessary. Therefore, you should not take this vow, but if Anjana takes it, it is good." Bapu supported only such vows which were taken after mature thinking, and maintaining that rashly conceived pledges are improper, he dissuaded people from keeping to such.

52

Since one Mr. Ojha was an efficient C. I. D. constable, the Government posted him to watch the Ashram which he did not dare enter. So, he kept loitering or sitting outside its gates. Bapu took compassion on him and asked: "Why do you put yourself to all these inconveniences? You should stay inside the Ashram. You

will find shelter against cold, sun and rain." From now onwards, Ojha began to sit inside the Ashram. Gradually, Gandhiji's ways and the Ashram atmosphere influenced him. He then began to spin the whole day and work in the Ashram. By the time the 1942 movement started, he was so taken up with the Gandhian ideals that he resigned his post soon after Bapu's arrest. I had noticed at Sabarmati also that, when the C.I.D. man came to ask for the names and addresses of the visitors, the manager readily gave them to him as Bapu had nothing to hide.

53

Jajuji's son, Narayan, was recently married. His (Jajuji's) wife, whom we used to call Bai, came to the Mahatma with the new bride to invoke his blessings. As my hut lay on the way, I accompanied them. Seeing Bai, Bapu at once remarked, "You have not brought me those *pakoris* containing *chillies*." Bai replied, 'Oh Bapu, you are cutting jokes for nothing. Have you ever tasted them?' Then, Bapu patted the back of the bride and gave her his blessings.

54

Balwantsinhji, who was the manager of the Goshala (cattle farm) and the agricultural department at Sevagram, was a very independent-minded man. He was not highly educated but possessed a remarkable spirit of service, and was very hard-working. He had a crude manner of talking even to Bapu, who tolerated it. One day, while Gandhiji had stepped out for walk, he brought a male calf and naming the cow, he said that she had calved. Bapu was delighted and running his hand over the calf he remarked: "This is good. You have begot a son!"

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